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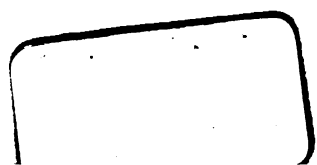
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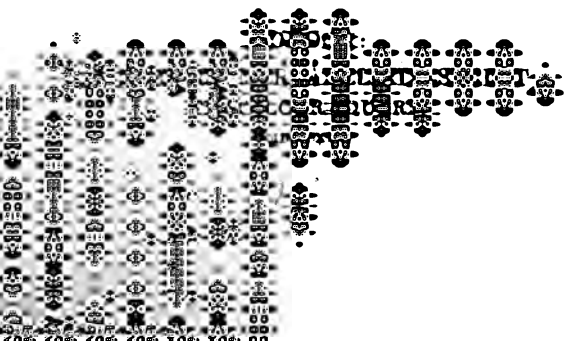
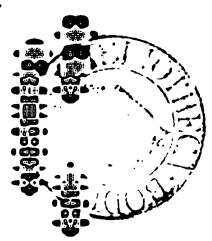
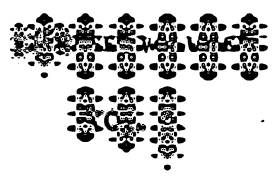
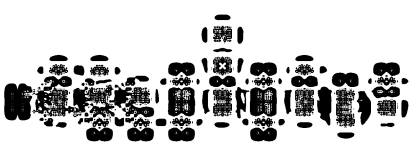
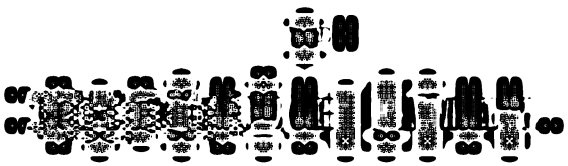
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THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY.



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THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

IN my young days—long, long ago—when I looked at everything on its bright side, and had just as much idea that I should live to be the pope, as that I should live to be what I am—an old bachelor, considerably gouty,—in those merry days it was my wont to say to Lady Desborough—“My dear Lady Desborough, how happy you ought to be with one such lovely daughter and three such lovely nieces, and all so completely under your own guidance! Why, in a few years you will be the most envi-

able chaperon in the world. Really, if I were not John Greville, I think I would be Lady Desborough."

And she would reply, looking proudly around her as she spoke,—“ I am, indeed, singularly fortunate in my children and in my relatives.”

“ My children” consisted of the one daughter I have mentioned, Julia Desborough—one son, William, some years elder than Julia; “ my relatives” (at least such as were alluded to in the foregoing speech), of three nieces, all pretty much of an age, none of them sisters, and all, more or less, under the charge of Lady Desborough. Her ladyship had high blood in her veins, so had the nieces. Two of them had fortunes; one had little but her face and her mind, and the beauty and brilliancy of these surpassed all the collected charms, both mental

and personal, of the others. Lady Desborough had been a beauty, and still, to her latest day, might be called a very fine woman. She had rank and wealth and good connexion; an excellent town-house; a good table, where *I* was always welcome; a capital family seat, where one always met the best company; well-stocked preserves—all the little etceteras, in fact, that make an acquaintance desirable. All these were hers, and, to boot, a goodnatured husband. Such was the order of things. Lady D. came first; the establishment, seats, preserves, stables, came next; and last, not least, the goodnatured husband, by whom she had become mistress of so much.

Sir Edward Desborough was certainly a *very* goodnatured man; he loved his wife, loved his children, loved the nieces, was kind to his

servants, was kind to his horses (the park was full of superannuated steeds), was kind to his tenants, was kind to every one that ever came near him, myself among the number.

A right of relationship made me so intimate with this family; I was a sort of a cousin—sufficiently near to admit of all the familiarity and the confidence conceded to a cousinly friendship. I was very fond of them; they were all very fond of me; and I found the hundred “little etceteras,” that made the great whole of this pleasant ménage, very much to my taste.

There was but one drawback: Lady Desborough was a blue—a thing of which I have an especial abhorrence. I used to reason calmly with her on the folly and absurdity of such a vocation, but I made little impression.

"My dear John," she would say, "I wish you would not oppose my predilections. I like to draw these sort of people around me, and I do it most easily by enrolling myself as one of their number; and, moreover, my verses are admired: and then one gets the annuals for nothing, which, I assure you, John, is an object."

"It must be," I would reply. "Four or five guineas every Christmas must be a great object to a person with only some twenty or thirty thousand a-year. I can quite understand that."

"How can you be so provoking, John?" she would answer. "I like it, and I will do what I like."

"You are quite right," I would say. "Heaven forbid that you should not; only I wish you had better taste."

This would provoke her horridly. "My taste! Why, really, John, you are too bad; every one thinks my taste perfect; even poor Sir Edward always says, 'Consult her ladyship, she has such a taste!'"

"He considers, doubtless, that the taste that chose him must be unimpeachable; but you must excuse me from coinciding with him in his panegyric on the taste that finds pleasure in the society of such outrageous lions as A, B, C, D, E, and F;" naming some half-dozen well-known characters, who were favourites with her ladyship.

I spoke a little feelingly. I had suffered so much from what a cleverish friend of mine used to call the "*blue bore*," that I hated the very sight of a lion, and always fled the country at the first sound of the approach of one of the

tribe. Now, Lady Desborough really liked to have these people with her; they flattered and pleased her, and dedicated books to her; and, in those days, to be "literary," either in actual perpetration or merely in spirit, was not quite so common as it is now.

"But if you do not take care, Jane," I would say, speaking more seriously, and putting on my cousinly face, "if you do not take care, you will imbue the girls with this blue taste of yours, and we shall find them writing poetry before they can spell, and perhaps running off with some of your handsome novelists. You should be careful whom you invite."

"And am I not so, cousin John? and have I not always the very first set about me, and none other? And, moreover, do you think that any girl brought up by *me* could ever possibly

commit such a solecism in taste as to make a romantic marriage? I can imagine my Julia running away with the groom, or the curate, as soon as with one of my 'lions.'

"My dear Jane, you quite horrify me. Do you class a curate and a groom together, and these with your dearly-beloved and highly-favoured lions?"

"As matches for *my* daughter, or as being likely to attract *her* attention, I do." And here all the mother would beam so proudly out of her eyes, that I would feel too delighted in remarking her delight to tease her any longer; and I would wind up the conversation by saying, "No, indeed, Jane, I believe you; your girls are thorough-bred, and that is enough; they will never shock good taste and good sense by any romantic misalliance; there will be no

dereliction, I prophesy, on their parts, from all that must be inborn in the inheritors of such blood as flows in their veins." And this speech I knew would please her ladyship, for she was very proud of her family.

"Thank you, John," she would reply. "I agree with you. I can trust them, daughter or nieces. They have been well taught. They know their station."

Every season Sir Edward and his family came up to town, or rather I should have said Lady Desborough and *her* family. They had a good house, in the dear atmosphere of May Fair, within cry of the clubs; where the dinners were excellent, and the smaller and more recherché ones pleasant enough, and where I was a constant visitor, spending great part of my time there—a sort of domestic animal, in

fact—tame about the house, creeping in and out as I pleased, with free access to every part of it—the library, the boudoir, and even to the schoolroom, where my presence was always hailed with delight, especially by my dark-eyed Caroline.

Caroline was one of the nieces, *the niece par excellence*, and my pet among them all; such a dear little girl! But I will not describe her now; wait until she is introduced—that is to say, until she “comes out;” when I will tell you what she was like, as well as her cousins.

I did certainly enjoy delightful privileges at that house. At first, Lady Desborough was rather inclined to attempt to make me of use, but she soon gave it up; she soon desisted from urging me to dine with them when they gave their “great spreads” (excuse this piece of

vulgarity); she soon ceased to ask me to join her literary soirées; she gradually allowed me to make my escape from the drawing-room in peace when its quiet was disturbed by odious morning visitors. I became, at last, as far as my connexion with the Desboroughs went, perfectly happy.

Then every autumn I regularly visited them at the seaside, accompanying them generally to their seat in Kent—Holmesley; and there I often lingered after the rest of the visitors had departed, with only the society of the family, for I was really fond of my cousins, as I said before, and it was an excellent hunting country about Holmesley, and, moreover, there was always peace at that time—no lions, no wearisome visitors, no manœuvring mothers, no flirting daughters, no noisy, racketing sportsmen; as

the old housekeeper used to say, "no noise, no nothing,"—all calm and silence; quite happiness to me after the fatigue of a London season and the bustle of the house in its crowded state. I actually found pleasure in playing at billiards with myself, and once tried to have a quiet rubber in the same style (for Lady Desborough always read or wrote in the evenings, and Sir Edward was often asleep, and I sometimes found the time a *little* heavy); but the management of three dummies was too fatiguing, so I relinquished my attempt.

But it is time I should tell my readers the story of the three nieces, and how it happened that so many young ladies should be thrown at once upon the care of my cousin.

The eldest of these girls (by a few months only) was Fanny Random; she was an orphan,

the only child of the eldest sister of Lady Desborough. Her father, a general officer, fell in the early part of the Peninsular war; her mother, always delicate, had survived him but a year or two. Fanny remembered her mother, but her father had gone abroad while she was yet an infant. She possessed a considerable property, money in the funds, a pretty seat in the north of England, and a nice estate conjoining. Fanny was a little heiress.

Next to her in point of age came Julia Desborough, the daughter; then came Mary Norton, then Caroline.

Mary Norton was the daughter of Lady Desborough's only brother, who was killed in a duel when quite a young man. His widow yet survived, but there seemed some strange mystery hanging over her, or rather some misfortune,

which rendered her unable, or unwilling, to undertake the superintendence and direction of her child's education, or to undergo the fatigues of presenting her when the time of introduction arrived. Lady Norton (her husband had been a baronet) was a person of very handsome fortune; she had a fine country house, she was of irreproachable character, good connexion, entitled to move in the best society, yet seldom availing herself of this privilege, seldom appearing in the world, but, when she did so, claiming and receiving, as a right, an almost universal homage, for she was beautiful indeed, and in manner attractive in the extreme.

But her short married life had not been a happy one; and when death released her from the presence of her husband, her youthful spirits did not return to her. She in her early

youth had been so gay, so brilliant; but all this had vanished, and it never came back; some blight had descended upon her, from which she never recovered.

Whatever it might have been, it was the bane of her whole life: energy—strength, both of mind and body, all hope, all cheerfulness seemed to have departed from her path for ever; and she had requested Lady Desborough, as the greatest possible favour and kindness, to accept the charge of her young daughter. She wrote to her making this request. Few were the words of her letter, but they were very touching: “Save my child,” she said; “save her from the fate that is mine—from the misery that has descended upon me: save her from the weary task of watching, day by day, the melancholy she cannot alleviate, but which will

soon mingle with her own nature. Take her from this mournful house, where there is nothing but grief and silence, to the gay society of yourself and your happy children: for *her* sake I wish my Mary to leave me."

So wrote poor Lady Norton; and my cousin was, I really believe, quite glad to receive another addition to the tribe of young ladies at Holmesley.

Mary Norton was an amiable girl, loving her mother, but willing enough to quit her gloomy presence for that of the bright mistress of Holmesley Park. A handsome allowance, of course, was made with her; she had her own maid, her own groom, and her own bay Arabian, which she sat like a little Amazon.

Mary went regularly to visit Lady Norton, and always returned on the very day which she

had originally fixed as the bound to her visit; and Lady Norton always wrote most gratefully to Lady Desborough, thanking her for her kindness and attention to her child.

Sometimes Lady Norton would come to Holmesley, and remain two or three days; sometimes she would visit the party at Brighton or Weymouth; sometimes she would even shine for a night or two among the stars of the London season, or appear at a drawing-room, as lovely as the loveliest in the rare galaxy; then as suddenly disappear, and return to the deep seclusion of her home. *There* she was always sunk in listless indolence; and those who ventured within that "charmed round" as morning visitors (for she never "saw company," as the phrase goes) described her as the most elegant, fascinating of women, buried alive in

the most gloomy, convent-like mansion that ever was entered, and by her own voluntary choice, which made the whole affair most mysterious and incomprehensible, and consequently rendered her ladyship the subject of much conversation, or rather gossip; all, however, leaving the matter as much in the dark as hitherto.

So much for Lady Norton. Now let us turn to Caroline, the youngest of the four fair cousins.

Caroline's name was also Desborough. She was the offspring of Sir Edward's only brother. This brother had soon run through his moderate patrimony, and dissipated much besides that had been supplied him by the liberality of Sir Edward. He had married a pretty, portionless girl, who had assisted him in furnish-

ing his gold with wings. Reduced at last to work for his livelihood, he had obtained a civil situation in India, whither his young wife had accompanied him ; and there Caroline was born.

Sir Edward, hearing of this birth, and knowing the embarrassments of his brother, wrote immediately to offer to receive the child when the time should arrive when they would consider it necessary to send her to England.

Thankfully did poor George Desborough accept this kind offer, and soon the little Caroline was on her passage home.

Home! those *born* in India call England *home!* And the poor exiles, watching their only child depart for those happy shores, felt bitterly the stern necessity that bound them to their distant sojourning. Well, the little Caroline arrived with her black ayah, and a store of In-

dian curiosities and trinkets as gifts to Lady Desborough and her infants: all the cousins were infants then, none had then become inhabitants of Holmesley; Caroline, the youngest, was the first that came.

George Desborough left great debts behind him: these he struggled to acquire the means of liquidating. He practised strict economy in his foreign residence, looking forward to the hope of one day returning to satisfy all claims, and to rest a while in his dear native land ere he passed to that deeper rest which he trusted he should take beneath the green turf and cool dews of an English churchyard.

Although at first he spoke of making regular remittances, and insisted upon doing so, he soon acceded to the generous wish of his brother, who would not hear of such a thing, but, on the

contrary, took every means of aiding and assisting George in the attainment of his object, and even went so far as to pay off such of his smaller debts as it was peculiarly painful to his pride to leave unpaid.

It was by Sir Edward's interest that the situation that afforded him bread had been obtained, and he felt deeply the kindness of this good brother, who now took the little Caroline, thus burthening himself with an expensive addition to his family for an indefinite period, perhaps for life; for the chances against poor George's return were many, as were the chances against his ever amassing sufficient to enable him to leave or bestow independence upon his daughter.

And I must say that great praise was due to Lady Desborough, who bestowed upon this

child an education and advantages equal in every respect to those given to her more fortunate cousins; and Caroline did credit to all, for she was by nature rarely gifted; and the costly setting was not more than was due to the precious gem—"the pearl without price"—for such was Caroline.

You will think I was in love with Caroline. I was not. When these young ladies were but fifteen, I was upwards of thirty—too old I thought to fall in love with any of them; though, had fate assigned any one to me as my wife, I believe I should have been perfectly happy with either; but as it was, I was regarded in the light of the friend of the family, the kind cousin, to whom all turned to communicate either their sorrows or their joys. I was the general "confidant"—the universal recipient

of all the little grievances and secrets of childhood, as I was of the more important griefs, the deeper joys, of advancing youth and matured womanhood.

Caroline—the beautiful, the brilliant Caroline—early showed a disposition for literature and its pursuits, which I do not believe she acquired from her aunt, but which was innate and in-born. She was a strange girl—such a mind! such an intellect!—grasping at all, mastering most things. She soon outstripped her teachers. She had as much real genius in her little finger as all the blues that infested Holmesley had in their whole composition. But I used to tease Lady Desborough, and tell her she had ruined the girl by associating her so early with the last-named style of individuals, and by her own example; and I prophesied that she would

turn out a sort of Corinne, and become *notée* in some way, which would be such a painful result to her ladyship's attempts at the education and bringing-up of youth ; and once, to my surprise, she answered, " Well, if such is Caroline's vocation, let her follow it ; she will have little to depend upon but her beauty and her talents. Sir Edward has done so much, he will not be able to do much more. Caroline's is a restless spirit. If she can force a way for herself to fame, and perhaps to wealth, let her do so ; I will take care she never goes beyond the bounds of propriety and good taste, but I shall not oppose her predilections. My daughter and my other nieces will be able throughout life to command the most expensive pleasures, or to glide through existence in the most luxurious idleness ; but it is not so with Caroline."

CHAPTER II.

BUT the cousins are now to make their début in the great world; the eldest is eighteen, the youngest is not a year younger. Lady Desborough decided that her daughter and Fanny Random should be introduced together, while Caroline and Mary Norton should wait for another season.

The mother of the latter coincided in this arrangement; and, accordingly, active preparations were commenced for ushering the selected twain into society.

The attractions of the great house in May Fair promised to be increased tenfold. Already a novel air of lightness and grace pervaded its stately apartments; already many a noble guardsman had paid his unusually punctual visits, anxious to obtain a glimpse of the "beauties," reported to be at that moment upon the point of *début*; many a younger son was equally precise in his duties, so great was the commotion excited in the respectable body to which he belonged on hearing that the "beauties" were also "fortunes." However, no one was favoured with a sight until the exact moment fixed upon by the sagacious mother and chaperon,—then out they came.

Fanny Random and Julia Desborough! great was the sensation made by your advent into "society," you were both so charming;

and what had not been done to enhance the charmingness (a coined word *that*—I take credit to myself for it),—what had been neglected? Everything that dress could do was done—everything that teaching could instil had been instilled. The Michau and the Dulcken of those days had been put in requisition, and Fanny, I have heard her admirers say, danced like an angel; while Julia, as I have heard *her* admirers say, played like a seraph.

Never having seen an angel dance, or heard a seraph play, I cannot speak as to these points from personal knowledge, but I dare say the comparisons were correct.

Julia Desborough was like her mother; of middle height, a fine intelligent face, a pure white brow, dark expressive eyes, rich dark hair, quiet, ladylike, amiable; altogether as nice a girl as could be.

She entered upon life with that calm self-possession which I should have admired more had she been a few years older ; but I thought it unnatural in a young girl so unused to the gaiety and the charms of London life to fall so at once, and with such *nonchalance*, into the routine of the daily occupations; going from one dissipation to another, from opera to ball, from the brilliant drive in the park to the brilliant dinner at home or under some distinguished roof, with the same absence of emotion manifested by the old stagers of half a dozen seasons; but perhaps this calmness was not the result of want of feeling, but of a strong mind, and great (what is called) "self-command."

However, Julia, to use Lady Desborough's phrase, "was all that a mother could wish," and she made a corresponding sensation.

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Fanny Random was rather the reverse of all this; she was always pleased, always gay, always elated, always remarking and admiring or criticising everything around her. In person she was about the same height as her cousin, with a figure the most lithesome and graceful that can be imagined; features somewhat petite, varying with every varying mood of a mind whose thoughts and fancies were always varying; light sunny-brown hair, hanging in loose ringlets; laughing eyes, of a clear hazel; a sparkling smile; hands and feet the smallest and prettiest in the world; not beautiful, perhaps, but so very pretty! Airy, fairy Fanny Random! were you not the very impersonation of grace?

Whatever Fanny Random did, or said, or wore, it always became her: if she danced, she

danced better than any one else ; if she rode, she sat her horse as one might have fancied "Hippolyta the beautiful" to have done ; if she wore mourning, people said, "How well Miss Random looks in black !" if she shone out in all the colours of the rainbow, people only admired her the more : and any colour became her ; she looked pretty in pink, pretty in blue, pretty in green, and I verily believe she would have looked pretty in yellow. Finally, Fanny was the only girl I ever saw get over a stile with anything like elegance.

All this time William Desborough, "son and heir," had been progressing to manhood ; he had graduated at Oxford, and was indeed a very fine young man, not wilder than young men generally are, with no "vice" about him, living amicably with his father and mother,

affectionately with his sister and cousins, and on very good terms with himself. A happy fellow was Willy Desborough, as I often told him.

But I could see, long before it became visible to others—long before he knew it himself—that a passion was dawning in his heart for the beautiful Caroline. .

Yes, he loved her!—loved her with all the deep, deep love of his warm and honest nature; while she scarcely remarked his attachment; and when at last its reality broke upon her——

But this should not come here. Caroline is not yet “out,” and here I am talking of her love affairs.

Fanny and Julia were presented together, both clad in snowy robes, both decked with virgin pearls; both made what is called “a sensation.”

A number of young men began to dangle after the cousins; some eligible enough, others quite the reverse. I watched the damsels and their suitors narrowly, constituting myself a sort of guardian over the former, and diligently obtaining information respecting the latter, which information I kept hid in my own heart until the moment should arrive when it might be of use.

Among the most frequent visitors at the comfortable house in May Fair was a gentleman of the name of Wilmot. He had a fine estate in Hampshire, a good establishment, an agreeable wife, and an only son, Tom Wilmot. The father was always called Wilmot, the son Tom Wilmot. At this time the latter was only sixteen, an Eton boy, and of him of course we saw but little; but his parents were constantly

associated with the Desboroughs, moving in the same circle, and having much the same tastes and inclinations. The Eton boy was already become an object of speculation to many a far-sighted matron, and fifty little acts of attention and civility were lavished upon the unconscious parents, which would never have been bestowed but for the high consideration entertained for the prospects of the son.

Poor Tom Wilmot—boy as he was—was captivated by the charms of Fanny Random; and during the few occasions on which he was enabled to enjoy the sunshine of her presence, I have often grieved, even while I could not forbear being amused, at the tears that I have watched gathering in his handsome eyes, while the lady of his love, all unconscious of the feelings she excited and the pain she

caused, was receiving bolder attentions from a host of more manly admirers.

One day a select dinner was given by the Desboroughs, especially in honour of the venerable Bishop of Stanwell, father to Lady Norton, who seldom entered into society, save so far as entertaining his friends at his own house went. This was on account of his advanced age—he was nearly eighty; and though his fine mind was still undiminished in power, his bodily frame was weak.

He was a man well known in society—in the very best society: not to know Henry Broughton, Lord Bishop of Stanwell, or, at least, not to have met him, was to argue yourself unknown; he was a distinguished character.

Nearly eighty winters had shed their snows

over his head—nearly eighty summers of unbroken good fortune and prosperity had given to his manner a gentleness and appearance of benevolence truly captivating ; a long life spent in the society of the wise and great had made his mind a storehouse of elegant literature and interesting anecdote.

His learning was profound, his memory wonderful, his manners the most graceful that can be imagined ; in politics he had always been what is called “ liberal ;” he had been the personal friend of Fox ; nor had his friendship with this great man prevented him from enjoying the closest intimacy with his yet greater antagonist.

Surviving these, and their host of brilliant contemporaries, the Bishop remained—the relic of a past age, and to the ceaseless contests of

the present day brought the aid of the experience gained in one gone by.

At his palace in Stanwell he had received as guests the most distinguished individuals of the time. Royalty itself had honoured him with its presence; a prince of the blood was his constant correspondent. The saloon at Stanwell had been the scene of meetings between those most conspicuous on the theatre of public life; there, had been seen all that was most noble, most lovely, most witty; there, came the gladiators of the great arena, the fierce combatants for distinction, the stout fighters for fame; these came to glean from his experience the principles that should direct their younger energies.

He did not write much; only now and then a clever pamphlet on some momentous ques-

tion, issued anonymously, would sparkle forth and astonish the world for a little space, the author being always well known to his own party.

He was a perfect courtier and an acute reader of character. Nothing escaped him : he could read the *heart* as others read books. Possessing learning almost unequalled in his day, he yet in worldly knowledge far surpassed all his other acquirements. Among his nearer connexions and dependents he was very popular ; popularity was his, almost without effort, nature had so gifted him—and he took care to improve upon the gifts so liberally bestowed. From the beginning, when, a friendless college tutor, he had as much apparent chance of becoming a bishop as I have of being King of the French, he had, by this popular manner, but

chiefly by his *worldly knowledge*, risen, and had taught all connected with him to *rise*. His sons were rising men, or had already *risen* to the height of their wishes; his daughters had all made splendid matches; such of his grandchildren as were grown up were all *rising*. These children and descendants were, like the unhappy Lady Norton, remarkable for beauty and striking personal qualifications.

You will ask, "Is this unhappy Lady Norton then so enviable? and she is one of this fortunate family;" and I reply, "Yes; she too is considered to have made a 'splendid match;' she obtained by her marriage all worldly advantages—wealth, rank, connexion; what else could she desire? Money, titles, station—these are what people marry for, and these were hers."

Well, the dinner took place, and for the first time in my life I was enabled to appreciate all the many charming points in the old Bishop's external character—his good nature, his graceful adaptation of the conversation to the views and characters of his companions, his gentle care to wound no prejudice, to touch upon no tender point: I was delighted with him.

He paid particular attention—it was ever his wont to do so—to the young ladies of the party; Fanny and Julia were honoured by his especial notice; and when we returned to the drawing-room he drew me on one side, to question me about Mary Norton, his grandchild.

“Does she bid as fairly as these two?” he inquired, as his eye glanced towards the cousins; “is she as pretty? has she *their* manner?”

“ She has much that they possess, my lord, and very much besides,” I replied. “ Mary Norton will do even *your* family credit ; she is lovely and clever.”

“ ’Tis well : I should be sorry if she did not repay Lady Desborough’s attention and interest. I must persuade her ladyship to bring me my granddaughter to-morrow. I should like to see her. Tell me ; whom does she resemble ? her mother, or her—father ?”

There was a slight hesitation as he pronounced this last word. I answered quickly—

“ I never saw Sir James Norton ; but she is like her mother. Mary is like her mother, yet not so beautiful ; even now, while one is in the opening dawn of youth, and the other already passing from the better part of life, the fading beauty eclipses the budding one, — and yet Mary does not lack charms.”

"May I ask you to describe her, sir?" said his grace. "I fear this conversation cannot be very interesting to you, but my heart is in the matter. It is long since I have seen her; she was then quite a child; and I am most anxious to know something about my little grandchild. Pray excuse my troublesome curiosity."

I assured his lordship that "no conversation could be more pleasing to me than one that related to any of my dear little girls;" and then I described Mary Norton to him. I told him of her tall, splendid figure—her brilliant complexion, pure white and red, but so delicate—her large clear blue eyes, her broad forehead, her rich rosy lips. I told him of her profusion of sunny chestnut hair, with its showers of ringlets—of her fine graceful bearing, stately step, her natural elegance.

“ Ah!” he exclaimed, involuntarily, “ how like her mother ! Another season,” he continued, “ and she will be introduced into life. I hope she will make a *good match* !”

And this last sentence reminded me that I had heard that his grace was somewhat addicted to matchmaking.

Closing the conversation, the Bishop returned to the general party. Then I perceived that a new competitor had joined the ranks of the besiegers of the fair cousins, and I also perceived, in the object of his attack, a pleasure in receiving his homage which I had never before observed excited by the attentions of any of her admirers.

This fortunate hero had been seated next this gracious heroine during the dinner, but I, on the same side of the table, had not been in a

situation to remark anything that might have taken place. The heroine was Julia Desborough; the hero was a young man of the name of Wentworth, a lieutenant in the navy, penniless, but of noble family.

He was a fine young fellow—open-hearted, frank, and generous—the very soul of honour. He was third son to the Earl of Carlington. “What a pity,” I thought, “handsome Freddy Wentworth, that you are not the *eldest* son!”

Freddy was talking in his usual animated style, and Julia was listening with twice the apparent interest I ever saw her display in any one. Her soft dark eyes were fixed intently upon his face, and a beaming smile rewarded his merry sallies, as a gentle sigh did his mournful anecdotes—for he was detailing the events of his last voyage, one that had been

marked by changeful accidents. Shipwreck, and danger, and death, and bloodshed, and all the varied sufferings of a gallant crew, he was telling, and telling well. And she was sitting, quite absorbed in the interesting narrative, in such a graceful attitude, many others of those in that apartment remarking her, she remarking no one but the young speaker beside her.

I watched them with no joyful feelings. "Ah!" I thought, "there is misery preparing *there*. I must try and rescue Julia ere it is too late. This, if it ever ripen to an attachment, will ripen to certain sorrow. Lady Desborough would as soon dream of her daughter wedding "the curate or the groom" as this poor child of fortune, the third son of a not particularly rich earl—his elder brothers being each a young Hercules in strength, and the

second, the only one employed, in such a peaceful profession!—no chance of either dying or being killed off! No; the thing will not admit of calculation: sweet Julia, it cannot be!”

But I was not surprised at Julia's preference for the young sailor, shown in the attention with which she listened to his discourse, while she turned coldly from the homage of more brilliant men, equally anxious to please her; for he had a freshness, an animation, an earnestness, contrasting pleasantly with the elegant listlessness affected by many of these.

And when the time for departure arrived and the carriages were announced, the look of surprise with which the couple raised simultaneously their bright eyes to the time-piece showed how little they guessed at the flight of

the enemy, and how pleasant the evening had been to them. And then, in the adieux, how different was the look that passed between them—how different the lingering pressure of the hands, from the cold farewell, the careless grasp, given and received by the remainder of the parting companions!

When all had departed, and the young ladies had retired to rest, I lingered for a few moments to discuss the past evening with my hostess.

“You must not invite young Wentworth too often,” I said. “I see that he admires Julia, and it will be a pity if you allow an attachment to spring up between them. Why did you not ask his elder brother instead?”

“Frederick Wentworth’s coming at all was quite unintentional on my part, I can assure

you," replied her ladyship. "I invited the Earl, the Countess, and Lord Neville, and they accepted the invitation; and I was much surprised to see Freddy arrive in the place of the latter. But Neville is confined to his room by a sprained ankle—he slipped down stairs this morning—and Freddy came in his place, 'rather,' as the Countess said, 'than make a break in the table,' which I know she hates herself; but I should have preferred the break to the guest."

"Speaking in the vulgar tongue," I rejoined, "you would rather have had his room than his company."

"Exactly so," said her ladyship.

"Really," said Sir Edward, who was listening, half asleep, to our conversation—"really I think you are unnecessarily afraid. Because

poor Frederick talked to Julia, are you to suppose he is going to fall in love with her, or she with him? For my part, I was very glad to see him, and I will have him asked again. Poor Freddy! he is my godson."

Her ladyship stared at this manifestation of independence on the part of Sir Edward, but all she said was—

"I shall take care not to invite the Carlingtons again until Lord Neville has recovered from his sprain. But did you hear, John," she continued, turning to me—"did you hear what interest the Bishop expressed in Mary Norton? I shall take her to-morrow to call upon him. I hope he will like her; he may do something for her some day, he has always such a good set about him. How well he married his own daughters! and Maria, her

mother, was always his favourite child. That was a splendid match!"

"Do you call a marriage that resulted in the misery of the wife and the early death of the husband—for doubtless that duel had some connexion with Maria—a good match?" exclaimed Sir Edward. "I wonder you should speak in that strain, my dear."

"I did not say it was a happy match; but that was Maria's own fault. If she could not make herself content with such an establishment and such advantages she deserves no pity. But, in a worldly sense, it *was* a splendid match."

"I hope," I said, "that Mary may make one as brilliant and more blessed than that has been. But perhaps, as you say, Lady Norton has been in the wrong."

“She was so far in the wrong that she refused all comfort. She hugs her grief closely to her, whatever it may be (for none know her cause of sorrow). Surely she ought to strive against it. All have their sources of unhappiness—all suffer, have suffered, yet must suffer; but all do not weakly bend before the blow. I pity her, because she is so weak.”

So spoke Lady Desborough; and I admired the proud self-reliance her words showed, but I could not help saying in reply,—

“Ah, Jane! you are the last person to judge of what others feel; you are, and you have always been, so prosperous and so happy; you do not know how misery breaks the spirit. Maria has not a strong mind. Weak natures sink so soon; and, knowing not her cause of misery, you cannot know her extent of suffering.

Judge her not by the standard of your own heart, untried in woe ; and let us try to preserve Mary from a fate like hers."

"Amen." chimed in Sir Edward, whom we thought quite asleep ; "and now, good people, let us go to bed, for I am very tired, and you are both of you very prosy to-night."

"A pretty broad hint that I should depart," I exclaimed, as I rose and shook hands with the goodnatured baronet. And—

"Why, really, Sir Edward, you are the very rudest man !" said her ladyship at the same time, as she rose and rang the bell.

And so, after a few more words, referring to the plans of the morrow, I bade them good night, and vanished.

CHAPTER III.

THE next was an opera-night; and when I entered the house, rather late, I saw the bright face of Lady Desborough just a *little* clouded, and Freddy Wentworth comfortably established behind the happy Julia, who looked perfectly radiant, so much did the excitement of the new pleasure she experienced add to the beauty of her fine countenance.

Fanny Random, as pretty as ever, was receiving the attentions of one of the great "lions" of the day; receiving, but not en-

couraging them, for she was singular enough not to like the almost universally admired George Danvers.

George Danvers was a brilliant, fashionable, clever, handsome, heartless man of the world; no longer in the season of youth, he was, however, more fascinating now than he had ever been; he added, to all personal advantages, those that experience bestows—he had learned the way to *please*.

He had a high literary reputation, without having done much to obtain it, calculating by quantity; but the quality had always been good—at least the quality of all that he acknowledged as his own; for it was sometimes whispered that George Danvers, in his young days, when he was poor and unknown, had been the author of many a trashy novel, which,

written for the sake of the pittance it produced, and read for the purpose of passing an idle hour, had—these objects gained—sunk to a deserved oblivion. But Danvers, whilst struggling for a livelihood, had not forgotten, whilst writing against time to satisfy present necessities, that, to acquire a reputation that should be in itself a fortune, care must be taken; and so, concealing his name while he poured forth book after book of flimsy nonsense, he proclaimed it loudly when he produced a work of higher order; and thus came at last to be considered “that very careful and elegant writer, George Danvers!” whereas, had the whole of his literary career been known, the cry would have been, “that poor scribbler, Danvers! you cannot mean surely to patronise *him*?”

Danvers had not been born to the station he

now moved in—in fact, people did not know well what he had been born to. They said he had once been married; but, if so, his wife must have died long since, for she had never been seen or heard of in conjunction with himself. They said his father had been “nobody;” yet George would talk somewhat pompously of “his paternal estate in Huntingdonshire.” But one thing they also said, that George had always been remarkable for the talent of making his way in the world—remarkable for natural advantages, beauty of person, and gentlemanly demeanour.

These qualities, conjoined with some unquestionable talent, had gradually brought him into notice; and, having acquired a small independence by his exertions, he was further favoured by the unexpected legacy of a handsome sum

of ready money from a rich old vulgar namesake of his own, whom he had never seen, who had never seen him, but who thought it a very fine thing to establish a relationship with the "author" for the benefit of the remainder of the race of "Danvers, tobacconists," at Birmingham. George thanked his stars, went down to Birmingham, attended the funeral of the old tobacconist, won the hearts of the sons, half flattered the daughters into the belief that he was going to marry them all, returned as soon as he decently could, and never, from that hour, went near the flourishing establishment of the successors of the departed millionaire.

But George was now in his glory ;—plenty of money, a name, admired, petted, caressed; he *now* could afford to write nothing but what was readable, and he also could follow his

natural inclination for the vocation of a Macenas.

He took a nice bachelor residence in Spring-gardens, where he had everything about him quite *comme il faut*; he gave two or three elegant dinners in the course of the season, and was certainly generally hospitable to the poorer brethren of his tribe. He was very particular as to his acquaintances, only associating with unexceptionable people, going only to the best houses, not dining wherever he was invited, or suffering himself to be made a lion of by anybody, but affecting a rather strict exclusivism. He commenced with being *select*, and he ended by becoming *recherché*.

At the time of which I now speak, George Danvers could not have been less than thirty-eight, but time had touched him lightly; there

was not a wrinkle on the broad white brow, not a line of silver in the dark luxuriant hair; he had those qualities which the French say carry a man through life most easily, and, doubtless, these had kept him youthful. I had known him long, and never liked him. Men living as we did about town together, sharing the same pleasures, following the same pursuits, become acquainted with various points in each other's characters, which, when meeting only in general society, we should never arrive at. Thus I learned the thorough heartlessness, the complete worldly-mindedness, the selfishness, of George Danvers. But I do not the less admit that he was, exteriorly, everything that was delightful, and I was surprised that Fanny Random did not like him.

He was intimate at Lady Desborough's, and

generally made one of the autumn party at Holmesley. He was known to be on the lookout for a rich wife, and it struck me that he was beginning to lay siege seriously to the heart and fortune of our pretty little heiress. What a relief it was to me to watch the cold air with which she looked at, and listened to, the most agreeable man in town !

I had heard George Danvers, in his unguarded moments, say often " that he must marry a rich girl ; his fifteen hundred a-year did very well for a bachelor, but he should much like to add a couple of thousand to his income ; he could then live like a gentleman." Whenever I saw George Danvers paying attention to any one, I always remembered these words, and I inquired " how much" the fair object of his attentions " would have?" and I always received the

same answer—"Oh, that is *the* heiress, Miss So-and-so! Quite a catch!"

Certainly, in that opera-box, of the two groups, the one that excited most attention was that composed of George Danvers and Fanny Random. Many a pretty face wore a *rather* envious look as the eyes glanced towards this couple. But no one envied, few remarked, the happy Julia, the tenfold happy Frederick, as they sat together, now chatting, laughing, with all the gaiety of pleased excitement—now silent beneath the presence of deeper and mightier feelings.

Oh, love, love! Certainly, if there is a heaven upon earth, that little word comprises it. But, hush! what business have I, an old bachelor, to be writing about *love*?

Lady Desborough had always cherished a

wish that Julia should marry Lord Neville, the eldest son of the Earl of Carlington. The latter was not a very rich earl, it is true, but the estates were fine and unencumbered, the title was an old one, the connexions unexceptionable; there were a hundred little reasons why she wished for the match: and now—how provoking!—the whole scheme seemed upon the point of frustration, owing to that stupid Lord Neville tumbling down stairs. I knew her ladyship's thoughts directly I looked upon her face, and I could not help sympathising with her. It must have been trying!

What did *I* do? I went round to the box. I managed to get young Wentworth out of his seat, and I took it myself. Freddy looked as though he could have shot me. Lady Desborough thanked me by her sweetest smile. Julia,

for the first time in her life, showed signs of vexation. I felt for the lovers. I was half inclined to turn to Julia, and say, "I do it for your own good."

Poor Freddy had no further opportunity of addressing himself to Julia. He lingered, not able to tear himself away, and, I believe, in the hope of being allowed to take her to the carriage; but even this was denied him: I maintained my appropriation of Julia, and, seeing Danvers offer his arm to Fanny, I looked at Freddy as I passed, and said, "Will you escort Lady Desborough?" And what could he do? He handed the mother down with but an ill grace; while I never quitted Julia until I saw her safe in the farthest corner of the carriage.

But love, that laughs at locksmiths, laughs also at careful mammas and vigilant male

cousins. When I entered the room on the night following, at a ball given by Mrs. Wilmot, the first couple that greeted my eyes consisted of the young people I had taken such pains to separate on the night previous, dancing together, and looking as though they were made for each other, so well did the dark soft eyes, the dark hair of Julia, show beside the bright locks, the blue vivacious glances of the sailor—so well did her slight graceful form show beside the tall distinguished figure of her admirer. They were, certainly, well matched. “What a pity,” I thought, “that I must separate you again!” But so it was. I persevered. I asked Julia to dance myself (I had not danced before I don’t know when); and I introduced poor Freddy, much against his inclination, into a large family of young ladies, whence I knew he would never

escape until he had been forced to run the gauntlet through the whole bevy.

I succeeded. Freddy got so entangled, that I had the pleasure of seeing him, as I handed Lady Desborough to her carriage (followed by Fanny and Julia, each leaning upon a titled arm), lead the fifth Miss Deacon to her place in the quadrille; and I have not the least doubt he was engaged to dance with three or four more after that.

But if Julia's "lingering, backward look" towards the fifth Miss Deacon's partner could be any consolation to him, that consolation he certainly enjoyed; for I could not prevent this manifestation of her regret; and I saw, much to my chagrin, that their eyes met.

Owing to our good management, the young people did not, for some weeks, again enjoy

such opportunities for improving their acquaintance. Wherever Lady Desborough was invited, she took care to ascertain first whether Fred Wentworth was expected; and, if so, she either contrived to persuade her daughter to stay at home, or she got up an impromptu cold herself and declared that she was unable to chaperon the girls, and would trust no one else with such an important office; or she invented some excuse for declining the invitation altogether. On these occasions I always went myself, in order to perceive how matters progressed with Freddy. I saw the look of mortification with which he invariably greeted my entrance, for when I appeared alone all hope of the Desborough party was gone. On ordinary occasions I always accompanied her ladyship. I saw the look of mortification with which my entrance was

hailed, and I was sorry that I did not perceive his anxiety diminish; on the contrary, every fresh occurrence of the kind seemed to increase the distress he evidently felt, nor did I remark that any new flirtation was likely to chase the image of Julia from his mind.

Julia apparently remembered him as well—if one might judge from the disappointment she evinced at each successive result of her mother's successful manœuvring—if one might judge from the anxious glances I could perceive her cast around the rooms she would enter in the course of their engagements, rooms which her careful parent took good care should be all void to her—and if one might judge from the deep flush that settled on her cheek when by chance she and Freddy encountered each other during some drive or ride.

But there was a long-standing engagement to a grand ball at Carlington House, which Lady Desborough knew she could not evade, nor did she altogether wish to do so. Her object was to gain Lord Neville for her daughter; and at this long-thought-of ball she had hoped to achieve that object. The ball had been postponed on account of the unlucky accident to the young heir of the Earldom of Carlington, which had been the original cause of the acquaintance between Freddy and Julia. *Unlucky accident!* Not so did Freddy deem it—not so did Julia.

To this ball Julia looked forward as though she had never been to a ball before, and was never to go to a ball again—as though her whole fate in life was to depend upon this one event.

Meantime much visiting went on at "our house," as it was my wont to call Sir Edward Desborough's mansion. And in particular I must notice a large party composed chiefly of lions.

Lady Desborough was in her glory, receiving and paying compliments; Julia looked resigned; Fanny was in a most arch and mischievous mood; William Desborough did not make his appearance; Sir Edward got hold of a man as quiet as himself, and passed the evening discussing the results to be expected from the emancipation of the Catholics; I, ensconced behind her ladyship's chair, listened and remarked, and was very much amused.

There was George Danvers, so handsome! so fascinating!—there was Anecdote Hamilton, prosing so awfully!—there was Professor Grinston, the very acme of learning!—there was

Mrs Duff, that great blue, in a turban, trying to look like Corinne!—there was the last translator of Juvenal, and the editor of the leading critical journal of the day. There were a great many more of the same genus; some talking, some holding their tongues, but each playing a part. “Anecdote” Hamilton was so denominated because he was always telling stories, or, as he called them, anecdotes. He had travelled—really knew something; but was so prosy, and withal so merciless in the amount of prosing he inflicted, that he was universally voted a bore; yet, being a man of fashion and fortune, was invited everywhere.

Lawrence, the editor, though an editor, was a man of family, and was born to the set in which my readers now meet him, and must not be classed with the lions, who were invited for

the amusement of the initiated, to whose number he essentially belonged.

The conversation turned upon the authors of that day, who were very much the same description of people as the authors of the present day. They talked about A, the romance-writer; B, the novel-writer; C, D, E, F, and G, all popular writers. Lady Desborough spoke well on this subject, and there were others in the company who could keep up the ball.

Anecdote Hamilton began, addressing Lady Desborough. "Have you read Brunton's last work? They say he surpasses himself in picturesque description. I remember telling him once an anecdote which he has introduced into it. I will tell it you."

"Thank you, Mr. Hamilton. I shall be delighted to hear it. But you ask me whether I

have read the work. I have done so, and I like it as well as I do any of his."

"And do you not admire his style generally?"

"Perhaps her ladyship thinks with me," said the editor—"that no beauty of style can compensate for moral deficiency." And the editor, who was a stern critic, and hated Brunton in his heart, tried to look virtuously dignified, but succeeded only in gaining a little extra pomposness of manner.

"And do you think Brunton so wanting in moral?" inquired George Danvers.

"I think, in describing his heroes, he clothes the worst conduct and the greatest want of principle in personal attributes so fascinating, that he makes one forget the sin in admiration for the sinner; nay, so seductive is his language, that one almost forgets how false is the morality,

how poor the philosophy, that, in his *virtuous characters*, stand them in the stead of religion. Like Byron, he half makes one in love with vice. And then," added the editor, snappishly—"and then there is so much claptrap about him."

"Claptrap!" exclaimed Hamilton, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Brunton's genius.

"Yes, claptrap!" rejoined the editor—"trick! What are his italics, and his capital letters, and his pauses, and his exclamations, but claptrap and trick?" And Lawrence looked quite fierce. "Does he ever acknowledge a plagiarism? and yet his works swarm with them. Are not many of his most beautiful passages translated literally from the German? Does he not repeat himself both in idea and illustration? What can be more

tricky than his mode of ringing the changes upon three words, which he constitutes into a sort of oracle for his hero, who hears or repeats them at every turn?—his commencing simple nouns with capital letters, thereby investing them with a personal dignity? All that is so ridiculous; and yet his style is so beautiful, that he might trust to it without having recourse to these. Certainly,” said the editor, “it is a beautiful style; there is no denying that: such splendid imagery! and his English so correct!”

“You are tolerably severe, though, upon our friend Brunton. But yet you will acknowledge that sometimes his morality is as pure as his language is beautiful,” observed Lady Desborough.

“Sometimes,” replied the critic. “Yet, even when that is the case, how forcibly his personal

character and his mode of life occur to the mind. One is as much amused with reading moral maxims, given forth by him, as with the superhuman degree of virtue which Lady — considers necessary to constitute a hero or a heroine worthy of her pen.”

“Oh, stop, stop!” exclaimed George Danvers. “Pray don’t attack the ladies!”

“I venture to prophesy,” continued the editor, “that Brunton will be forgotten not many years hence; yet he makes money now as fast as he spills ink.”

“You allow him but a short immortality,” said Anecdote Hamilton. “But I was going to tell you the anecdote that he has introduced.”

“Directly,” interrupted the critic, who could not bear to be checked in the flow of his discourse, for he thought he was talking well—

"directly. I would but say, in reply to your remark, that I, who have but a poor opinion of this sort of talent, think I give a very handsome allowance to each of the present 'popular writers,' when I allow twenty years as their average of immortality. I recommend them all to make hay while the sun shines: their day will not be a long one."

"And have you the same opinion of the talents of our friend Harrison as you have of those of the party just discussed?" asked I, speaking as quickly as I could, for I saw Hamilton's lips opening, and I dreaded the anecdote.

The editor was delighted to answer my question.

"I think Harrison a less dangerous writer than Brunton, inasmuch as he, though detailing character as worthless, and conduct as wicked, does

but simply detail : there is no gloss, no gilding, none of the dazzling beauty of language—sweet as music, to fascinate, almost to charm one into approval, if not into imitation. People talk of the mischief done by Harrison's works, but I laugh at the idea. One can fancy some persons wishing to turn pirates after reading the 'Cor-sair;' and one can almost fancy the heroes of Brunton, with their equivocal virtues and splendid vices, inspiring similarly : but that the matter-of-fact crimes and every-day misdemeanors of Harrison's characters should meet with imitation!—the thing is not to be imagined, and for that reason I pronounce Harrison's works to be of a far less hurtful tendency than those of Brunton. Harrison does but describe a career of wickedness, leaving the facts to speak for themselves; he does not whiten the sepulchre he loves to exhibit. Brunton presents you with a cup of

poison, but he twines the brim with flowers. To speak plainly, Harrison, with a world of talent, has not that glorious gift of genius which in Brunton hallows and beautifies the blackest and vilest materials, making all radiant by its divine light. Now you have my opinion of Harrison and Brunton."

So spoke the editor. I was amused. I resolved to keep up the conversation. Before Anecdote Hamilton could edge in a word I put another question.

"And do you think Jacques will have only a twenty-years' reputation?"

The critic was evidently rather sorry that he had prophesied so boldly on the score of the immortality to be the lot of the subjects of our conversation; he did not like my remembering his words so well; he answered, rather peevishly,—

“Really, Mr. Greville, you have an excellent memory. One cannot stand exactly by every idle word one utters in careless moments such as these. I will not say that Brunton’s name shall not descend to posterity, nor Harrison’s either, nor Jacques’s either: the virtue of the latter ought to immortalize him, for certainly, of all strictly virtuous writers, Jacques is the pink and flower. His heroes and heroines are patterns, his good characters always overcome all obstacles, and we are duly informed at the finale ‘that they lived very happily to the end of their days.’ His wicked characters meet with their deserts likewise, and die or are killed off just when they ought to be. Jacques is so good! he is sometimes dull; yet let us give him credit for elegant language, great power of description, accurate knowledge of the customs and manners

of the times he describes, and occasionally considerable capability of exciting the sympathies —only, unfortunately, they are excited on the wrong side, for his naughty characters, spite of himself, are always the most interesting ones. But Jacques is a gentleman, and one can see it in his writings, and that covers a multitude of sins."

"It does indeed," I echoed fervently, and I looked at George Danvers as I spoke.

"It does indeed," he also said, but he did not say it with his usual *nonchalance* of manner; and as my eye fell upon his, certainly his colour deepened.

Fanny Random was seated near him, and I heard her voice join in the exclamation; and then she rose and passed from his neighbourhood, placing herself as far from him as possible.

It was a most decided "cut," and I think George Danvers felt it as such; at least his attentions for that night were almost put an end to.

The editor was in a talking mood. He started off again without my having to give him a leading question—or any question at all.

"But there is H——, poor H——! *He* is a real genius, if you will. *He* can paint life as it is, and under every shape and colour: such ease! such wit! such nature! H—— is indeed a writer!

"You are enthusiastic," said Lady Desborough, smiling.

The editor looked grave.

"I know poor H—— so well; and I like him, as all do: his genius is so great, his social qualities so unrivalled, his disposition so ami-

able! but I regret his fate, such as it will be. Look at him—with age advancing, health failing; and yet, to my certain knowledge, he has done *nothing* for himself. He will die, as he lives, in difficulties, leaving behind him heavy debts, and, I fear, not an unsullied name; and yet he had talents which, properly directed, might have made him all that he is not—wealthy, honoured, respectable—not merely admired and pitied. How few men of genius do themselves justice! As for the women of genius——”

And here I verily believe the editor was going to burst forth into a tirade against the fair Sapphos and Corinnes, but he caught her ladyship's bright eyes fixed upon him, and he stopped in time.

“Pray spare us, Mr. Lawrence!” she said.

"Spare us! my dear madam! Can you possibly imagine I was going to include you in my censure? for I confess I did intend to censure."

"Then I am not to be ranked among the 'women of genius'?" archly inquired her ladyship.

Lawrence looked a little confused, but recovered himself instantly.

"Not among such women of genius as I would speak of." And the contemptuous tone with which he said this implied a compliment in the exclusion it pronounced.

"Are you not then partial to the tribe irreverently denominated 'blue'?" I inquired, rather wickedly, for the blues on that evening were many in number, and Mrs. Duff's turban, and hair *à-la-grecque*, were visibly in judgment against me as I spoke.

The editor saw the turban also, but was not to be daunted.

"A literary bias in a woman is not a thing to be reprehended," he said oracularly; "especially when their assumption of literary habits does not lead them to overstep the bounds that keep a woman graceful and feminine. That all can be combined in one let a near example witness,"—and he bowed to Lady Desborough,—“but the majority of our female authors are odious.”

The turban-wearer looked more gracious; *she* might be included in the minority.

"Half of them," continued the editor, "rush into authorship for the sake of making an *éclat*; and this is generally when, having arrived at a certain age, they have no longer any personal claims to attention. The world—which, though

receding from them, they do not wish to renounce—is attacked in another way; and, where a Frenchwoman becomes *dévoté*, an Englishwoman becomes *blue*. Would that these latter had the same vocation as the former!”

“ You spoke of them as women of genius,” I interrupted him: “ now I do not call the tribe of which you speak women of genius.”

“ But they call themselves so; and do you not know that in this world to assume is often to attain? Many and many a girl have I known talked into a beauty who has as much pretensions to being so as I have. Many a man have I known with a reputation for wit or for wisdom about as well deserved, but gained by assumption. Keep telling the world that you are a Solomon or a Sheridan, and the world believes you at last; and once obtain the

character, and it is never lost. There is Winston, the great wit. I have met him at dinner after dinner, and never heard him say a clever thing; in fact, he scarcely speaks at all: yet he never opens his lips, though only to ask you to take wine, but he is greeted with a roar of laughter. There is also Langdale, that 'giant of learning,' as I have heard him called; and what has he done? I declare I know of nothing, except that he wears spectacles, and is supposed to contribute to the 'Family Library.' Look at Lady Babington; can anything be more trashy than her works, poured out as they are, novel after novel? What do they contain but flimsy sentiment, dull dialogue, improbable plots, and much margin? And yet they sell, and, one concludes, are read. Did you ever read any of them?" he asked, turning towards me.

“My dear sir! how can you ask me such a question? *Me!*—as if I could be supposed ever to achieve such a task! No; life is too short for that sort of thing. But I never read novels, except the *Waverleys*.”

The turban looked gloomy. From the brains beneath its scarlet folds at least half a dozen works had emanated.

“And pray,” it said, “if you never read novels, how can you argue upon the merits of Mr. Harrison’s and Mr. Brunton’s books?”

“Oh! madam, one acquires a smattering sufficient to enable one to judge of such books without being obliged to wade through all the volumes. But there are exceptions to every rule, and I do sometimes read a good novel.”

“How can you tell that a book is good until you have read it?” persisted the turban.

“ When a writer becomes established to a certain extent, I conclude his writings to be readable, and then sometimes I venture upon them.” And I turned quickly to my friend the editor, and, to stop the tongue of the lady, I started that of the gentleman.

“ What then do you think of Mrs. Gough? Is not the possession of actual talent on her part recognised?”

“ Yes; I admit there is talent there—almost masculine talent; but even Mrs. Gough sometimes mistakes flippancy for wit, and the use of fine words for brilliant writing. However, I confess she has merit; at least she knows the world and something of good society.”

“ But you have said nothing about Dillons, the all-popular Dillons! Will he have an im-

mortality but of twenty years? Is his indeed to be the fate which was prognosticated for him by a brother editor of your own—‘that, having gone up like a rocket, he would come down like the stick’?”

“Up like a rocket he has certainly gone; as to his descent, I will not prophesy him so sudden a one. No; his knowledge of human nature alone will long preserve him from oblivion. Dillons is a wonderful man, yet has his faults.”

“Of course he has, or he would not be mortal, nor would he be honoured with your notice,” I replied.

“He gained his fame by the singularity of his style, which stooped to detail the minutest particulars instead of aiming at higher flights. He paints the every-day occurrences of life—

things that no one ever thought worth detailing before. His truth of description is unsurpassed, and his knowledge of human nature such that he, however ridiculous the characters may be he chooses to introduce, never creates an unnatural, seldom an exaggerated one. But he is beginning to strain his best points too far; he is too minute; he bestows the same elaborate finish on characters that cannot interest as he does on those better chosen; and he mistakes his forte if he imagines it to lie in the pathetic. He can command an occasional touch of true pathos, but, when he attempts to write a completely pathetic story, he fails. So much for Dillon."

"Is there no one else we can touch up?" I inquired. "Surely we have not run through the whole of our 'great' names?"

“The whole! why, we have taken but a few steps of the ladder; we have a long way to go before we arrive at the top. Listen to some of the really ‘great’ names—Wordsworth Byron, Southey, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Rogers.”

“I am glad,” I said, “to hear you begin with Wordsworth.” In that day Wordsworth, though already the idol of the discriminating few, was not so widely appreciated as he is now. It was the fashion, in many circles, to laugh at Wordsworth.

“I admire him,” replied the editor. “I never read Wordsworth without feeling myself better and happier for so doing; and do I not, in saying this, bestow the highest possible praise upon him as an author? Byron—delightful Byron!—raises a tumult in one’s heart, exciting all one’s

sympathies, filling one with emotion, unsatisfactory, because unreal; but Wordsworth calms and elevates the mind, giving birth to no feelings but those pure and worthy. Is not his the better part?"

"Pray don't become enthusiastic, Lawrence!" said Danvers, with a sneer.

"Go on, Mr. Lawrence," interposed the clear voice of Fanny Random; "*now*, I like to hear you talk."

"My dear Miss Random," said Lawrence, "whatever Mr. Danvers may say, believe me, he will not think the worse of you because you appreciate Wordsworth."

"My opinions are nothing to Mr. Danvers, nor are his of any interest to me," replied Fanny, haughtily.

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ominous commencement—"It was in the year eighteen hundred—no, I think it must have been eighteen hundred and one;" and I saw the resigned looks settling on the faces of the unhappy auditors. I thanked my stars—I had just escaped in time.

I seated myself next Fanny.

"Fanny, what do you think of all this?"

"I don't like it at all," she replied. "These learned parties are not at all my style. Julia and I are dying to go to bed; but I suppose we must sit it out."

"Of course you must. And what would George Danvers say if you were to go?"

"Don't quiz me about George Danvers. I cannot tell you, cousin John, how much I dislike that man."

"He does not appear to dislike you, Fanny."

"He likes the name of heiress, with which I am dignified," replied Fanny.

"Fanny, any one but you would be so proud of his attentions. Would you not like to be Mrs. Danvers?"

"No!" exclaimed Fanny in great indignation—"no! Do you think *I* would marry such a man?"

"Such a man! why, is he not the most fascinating of beings?"

"Not to me, cousin John; and I only wish this was the last visit he was ever to make here, for I have a feeling that his intimacy with the family will lead to no good. I cannot explain to you why I dread this; I scarcely understand my own motive for saying what I do; but this feeling exists strongly, and I cannot overcome it."

I was struck with her words, for I had also experienced something of this indefinite feeling of dislike mingled with dread; yet what was there to fear? Nothing; except that George Danvers was a dangerous man to allow great intimacy with where there were young girls: he was so agreeable, so likely to inspire attachment, and his vanity would induce him to try to do so, even at the expense of the happiness of the object of his attentions, and he would never marry except for money.

I did not dread that Fanny would accept him, even should he ever have the audacity to offer, but others of my little girls might be more susceptible. And then I always disliked him; I had often longed to quarrel with him; and I believe the dislike was mutual.

Here was I, so surrounded by tender ties,

that I had no wish to form a yet tenderer one. My heart was so occupied by its dear group of relatives, that it seemed to have no corner left that would admit the presence of a wife. I had never thought of marrying; but mine was not completely a selfish bachelorship. Selfish enough I was, Heaven knows—selfish from habit and education; yet I would have gone through fire and water to serve or protect any one of my little girls. But George Danvers was selfish from pure self-love: all that he did, or felt, or thought, or planned, referred to self solely; and with this selfishness was that mixture of personal vanity which, from inspiring him with the wish to charm, made him so formidable.

I believe he had no heart—he was born with no heart; strong passions, no affections; his life, as far as its love affairs had gone, had been

one course of heartlessness: he had passed from liason to liason, from intrigue to intrigue, with women whose profligacy had welcomed, or whose weakness had trusted him, yet had always kept within the bounds of conventional propriety, for his caution and his tact were equal to his want of moral feeling.

George Danvers had never been brought before the public in any scandalously notorious way; no, not even as the *pointee* of an epigram. His bachelor establishment was the very model of propriety. Fair indeed was the outward show—the “seeming, seeming.”

George Danvers had passed through life without experiencing any of those shocks of feeling which bring with them suffering, and leave behind them at least reflection. He had shaken off all his family connexions—he

had formed no lasting ones of any other nature. At the age of thirty-eight George Danvers had not one human being to care for—not one that cared for him; and he regretted it not. That such a man should like to establish himself on an intimate footing in such a house as Lady Desborough's was not to be wondered at; that he should lay siege to the most wealthy of the cousins was not to be wondered at; that any one he could take the trouble to please should not like him was greatly to be wondered at; yet was I most thankful that it was so, for I should have grieved indeed had one of my dear little girls fallen to the lot of such a man. And yet would it not have been better—? But I will not anticipate my story.

CHAPTER IV.

THE day arrived—the day of the ball, the wished-for ball—and nothing now could any longer prevent the meeting of the young lovers. So thought Lady Desborough with a sigh; so thought Freddy Wentworth with delight; so thought Julia with a happy flutter of the heart.

I have sometimes since thought that the very means employed to crush the attachment we dreaded served but to increase it. Perhaps had we never interfered in the matter the flame might have burnt itself out; as it was, the

smouldering fire lost nothing of its strength, and, at the first outlet presented to it, burst out into a blaze.

Lady Desborough took great pains that night to make Julia look as well as possible. Yet it was provoking to think that the care bestowed to captivate one brother should also tend to enhance the effect already produced upon the other; yet it could not be helped; Lady Desborough was obliged to run this risk.

She calculated that, in case of Lord Neville's being "caught," Julia would never hesitate as to the course she should pursue. Lady Desborough had remarked the pleasure her daughter took in Freddy's society, but that she should for one moment dream of entering into so "romantic" a marriage was not within the bounds of possibility. Should Lord Neville

manifest no predilection for Julia, Lady Desborough resolved that she would withdraw from her more intimate acquaintance with the Carlingtons as quietly and as quickly as she could. And, moreover, in another month Freddy was to join his ship, which was under orders for South America; and, long before his return, she hoped to see Julia a countess at least, or on the high road to such preferment. On the night in question Julia was beautifully dressed, and looked most lovely. She was in general so calm and unmoved that the slight inward agitation, occasioned by the circumstances of the hour, had power greatly to improve her outward appearance—flushing, as it did, her cheek, and brightening her eyes; for Julia was, as I have said, almost too much without emotion, or rather without its manifestations. When I

speaking of her showing signs of agitation, I mean that only to one who knew her so well as I did—one accustomed to mark every variation of her countenance—one read, moreover, in the workings of the heart—were these signs visible; and, after all, one was obliged to judge in her case from little actions, and words, and looks, that, in a less reserved nature, would have never been remarked. Before the party quitted the house in May Fair Lady Desborough had said to her daughter, “Julia, do not dance too often to-night with Frederick Wentworth; once will be sufficient; perhaps, if you are deeply engaged to other partners, you will be able to avoid it altogether.”

Julia answered so quietly, “Very well, mamma.”

“Of course he will ask you, politeness re-

quires that he should do so ; but you can easily decline. You will have abundance of applicants for your hand, my Julia, better worth dancing with than Freddy Wentworth."

"Very well, mamma."

"And, Julia—Lord Neville, he will most likely ask you to dance with him ; take care that you do so. His mother is one of my oldest friends. I am anxious that you should become better acquainted."

"I have never seen Lord Neville, mamma."

"But I will take care that you are introduced to each other. You will be sure to like him. He is a very agreeable young man ; far, far superior to his brother, even in appearance."

Julia's head was turned from me, and I could not see her face ; but there was no alteration in the tones of her voice as she replied,—

"I will do what I can to please you, mamma."

This was rather a prevaricating answer. Lady Desborough never spoke harshly to her daughter; but I saw that she was not quite satisfied with her style of receiving the maternal lecture. However, at this juncture William entered the room, and mamma never lectured before him, he was too fond of preaching rebellion; so they entered the carriage, and proceeded to Carlington House.

I took William in my chariot. Five minutes brought us to the door; but during those five minutes I had time to say,—

"William, it will be a good match for Julia if she marries Neville."

"Why should you think she is likely to do so? They do not know each other yet. I hope you and my mother are not going to turn matchmakers?"

I saw that William was not in very good case ; so, to provoke him, I answered,—

“ Yes, we are, William. We are going to marry Julia to Neville, Fanny Random to young Murray, and you to Lady Anne Grantley.”

“ You are very good. We are all very much obliged to you. As to the girls, if Neville and Murray wish to marry them, and they like the men, I see no objection ; but for myself I beg to be excused.”

“ And why, William ? Lady Anne is pretty, noble, rich. You can have no prior attachment, otherwise I would never name her to you ; but you, I know, are heart-free.” And, beneath the uncertain light of the lamps, I saw his face change as I spoke.

He replied, with something like a sigh,—

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In these few words I saw the seeds of all that was to come—the long affection of a life, the untiring faith; and, by his concluding sentence, I perceived that he already felt fear that he should not succeed in inspiring the love he was conscious was growing upon him.

"I think there can be little doubt," I said, "that, if you become attached to Caroline, your wishes will meet with no disappointment. Why should such be anticipated?"

"Caroline is so perfect!" he said. "She will have such a train of admirers! And she is a strange girl. Yet how charming! how beautiful! how brilliant! What an intellect! what a

mind! Ah, Greville!" he added, in more lively tones, "take care you manage to get the other girls off before Carry is introduced; she will cut them all out."

"*Chacun à son goût*," I replied, carelessly. "Many may admire the other girls more. Fanny and Julia have already a respectable list of beaux. But here we are, William. Put Caroline out of your head, and prepare yourself to play the agreeable to Lady Anne Grantley."

We had followed the other carriage so closely, that we were in time to escort the ladies into the ball-room. We were rather late, and it was already crowded. But Lady Desborough made her way to the hostess, and it so happened that at that moment both Neville and Frederick were near their mother. Doubtless, the near neighbourhood of Frederick did much to

render the impression made upon Julia a very favourable one; for that rose and varied in her cheeks owed its origin to that neighbour certainly added much to the beauty that fell to Julia's share.

Everything happened as Lady wished. Lord Neville was ever with Julia, and she only danced with Freddy Wentworth. As for Freddy in excellent spirits—dancing like a light ringlets floating round her made one feel happy to look at him.

I was watching her, and I observed a cloud pass across her brow, and she turned hastily round, as though in search of something. Her eye met mine, and then she found what she sought, for she

her hand, and made a sign with her fan, so slight that no one save myself would understand, even if any one observed it. I was at her side in a moment.

"Cousin John, if I wish particularly to avoid any one I may not choose to dance with, may I say I am engaged to you?"

"Of course you may, my dear Fanny," I replied, rather glad that she had made this request, for I only wanted an excuse to recommence dancing myself, feeling that, in the character of a dancer, I should have much greater opportunities of exercising my vocation as guardian to the young ladies.

When I glanced around the room I soon perceived the cause of Fanny's request, for, lingering about the doorway, I saw George Danvers.

George Danvers seldom danced, yet had never quite given it up ; and, though I had not observed him "standing up" for many seasons, I was not surprised to see him advance to Fanny Random, and evidently solicit her hand for the next set. And I also saw Fanny glance towards me as she replied. Taking the hint, I approached her, and offered her my arm.

"Then perhaps the following set, Miss Random?" said George Danvers, just as I joined them.

"I am also engaged for that, Mr. Danvers," answered Fanny. And, before Danvers had time to say more, I had drawn her arm in mine, and together we disappeared into the crowd.

But I looked back, and saw *such* an expression of almost malice gather upon the splendid

countenance of the rejected applicant ! I felt, I confess, a little too triumphant.

“ And so, Fanny, you will not dance with your friend Mr. Danvers ? ”

“ No, I will not, as long as I can avoid doing so. Of course I do not wish to be rude or uncivil to the man, but I won't dance with him, provided I can help it.”

“ And who have you been dancing with ? ”

“ Oh ! with Lord Neville, and Mr. Wentworth, and Mr. Murray, and a great many more ; and with one or two of my aunt's ‘ lions,’ actually.”

“ Have you really ? I should have thought most of the ‘ lions’ past dancing.”

“ You are quite mistaken. There are Crusden and Harrison, two of the most lively performers in the room. Look at them now.”

And I looked, and there they were, figuring away with all the spirit of the "corps de ballet," if not with all the grace—two male Taglionis.

"And you have been dancing with them, Fanny?"

"I have; and with the geographical poet also."

"And who do you call the geographical poet?"

"Don't you know? I christened him. The man that came to my aunt's with Mr. Roberts. I gave him that name because he mentions so many places in his poems. He describes a country, and names every rock, lake, hill, stream, field, and river, and then thinks he has written like Walter Scott. I know his idea upon the subject exactly."

"You are very clever, Fanny. But sometimes he writes sonnets that have no names of places in them."

“ Ah ! then he thinks he writes like Wordsworth.”

So Fanny ran on, talking a great deal of nonsense, amusing me by her pert remarks.

George Danvers asked her no more ; but I saw him take his place in a conspicuous part of the room, leading to the dance one of the most elegant women there—the rich, the beautiful, the noble Anne Grantley.

Perhaps he intended to mortify Fanny by thus coolly withdrawing his attentions, and by thus exhibiting the sought-after Lady Anne as his partner : but the shaft failed of its mark ; Fanny laughed, talked, was as merry and as happy as possible, thought little of him.

Lord Neville fell in love with Julia ; not as younger brothers fall in love, timidly and fearfully, but with that happy confidence of suc-

case which most "elder sons of earls" have the satisfaction of feeling when entering upon any matrimonial attempt. Every one remarked his attentions to Julia that night. She received them without the slightest manifestations of pleasure, yet without in any degree declining them.

But the *one* dance that she danced with Freddy was characterised by stronger symptoms of feeling. She was animated, so was he; they talked earnestly, they parted lingeringly. But Julia obeyed her mother, and danced with him no more.

The brothers were both fine young men: some people thought Freddy the handsomest; Lady Desborough has declared Neville to be so. I preferred Frederick's face myself—the expression was so much more open; yet each had his

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extremely aristocratic mode of moving, speaking, acting, that distinguished Lord Neville. The word "nobleman" seemed written on his face. So handsome, so haughty, so elegant! Full of faults I believe he was, yet always thoroughly a gentleman. Had he not been the eldest son—had he not been the spoiled, self-willed eldest son—he would have been the best fellow in the world; but as it was, early and continued indulgence had marred the original beauty of the work not a little.

Frederick was almost as elegant, quite as well-bred. His style was totally different—a face all smiles and sunshine; white teeth, shown perpetually, and lighting up his face every time he spoke; soft light-brown hair, curling round his temples; blue eyes, a merry laugh, a very musical voice, and the kindest,

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for he was seldom at home. The Templar had the run of his father's house—horses, carriages, and establishment; and, by the aid of private subsidies from his mother, managed, as he himself expressed it, “to scramble on.”

His father used to say to him, “Henry, you must make yourself agreeable to some heiress.”

And Neville would rejoin, “Ay, Harry; many would take you on the chance of my departing this life, or remaining in it in a state of single blessedness. I’ll give out that I have been crossed in love, and never mean to marry, and that will be in your favour; but you must look sharp, my good fellow, or I shall go off before you, and then you will fall very low in the market.”

And to Frederick, Lord Carlington would say, “As for you, Freddy, you must learn to

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But matters, that appeared so smooth, were in reality drawing to a very unpleasant crisis, as you shall hear in time.

Frederick, hopeless as he must have been, still continued his pursuit—he could not help it. Poor fellow ! he was very much in love. For my part, I hoped for the best ; I conceived it impossible that Julia could be insensible to the honour done her in being thus selected from so many lovely competitors by one of the great “ catches ” of the day. That Frederick had made an impression upon her fancy at first I plainly perceived, but I thought the dazzling of this second and more brilliant homage could not fail to obliterate all previous impressions. But I was wrong : Julia’s mild nature was a firm

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the very essence of elegance, as Fanny Random was of grace—natural, inborn grace.

William moved about the apartments with his usual listless, careless manner. He led to the first dance the magnificent Lady Anne Grantley, and then he danced no more.

Lady Anne was the only daughter of a duke, the heiress to a splendid fortune, herself a splendid being. I had always fancied she regarded William with some partiality; and what a match it would have been for him—great wealth, and the best connexion in the kingdom. He certainly preferred her society to that of any other woman, but that was all that could be said; he never sought it, only seemed to accept it gratefully when it came in his way.

Perhaps she reminded him of the Caroline immured in a dull schoolroom within a few feet

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smile, the flashing eyes, the proud turn of the head, that reminded me of Caroline; when she was silent there was something in the fine intellectual expression, so full of self-repose and self-reliance, that also reminded me of Caroline; but there was more hardness, more coldness about Lady Anne. She was above most weaknesses herself; she contemned them too much in others. *She* would never have loved——

But here I am again anticipating.

As for the proposals Lady Anne had received, I suppose they were innumerable—at least, so it was said. I believe, if I had thought there could have been any chance of my being accepted, I should at one time have offered to her myself. I am sure William Desborough would not have been refused, but we could not persuade him to try.

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he was one of Nature's gentlemen—open-hearted, truthful, generous.

At this ball the first symptoms of rivalry between the brothers were openly shown. Lord Neville wished to hand Julia into the supper-room, Freddy did the same; both applied at the same moment, but Julia took Frederick's arm; although, certainly, if either could be said to have spoken first, it was Lord Neville. Indeed, Freddy never spoke at all, but offered his arm in silence; it was accepted, and Lord Neville could not but perceive that some understanding existed between them. He was stung with jealousy—he could not command himself. It was mortifying certainly; yet as certainly he forgot himself when he exclaimed—"The lady seems to prefer you greatly, Frederick."

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The words might apply only to the simple incident of the moment, but Lord Neville took them in a fuller and farther sense, and doubtless did Julia intend that he should do so.

Lord Neville turned upon his heel without a word and left the house immediately.

Frederick and Julia went down to supper together, and Lady Desborough saw them enter, and perceived also that Lord Neville was not there. Long and anxiously she watched, expecting to see him return, but he came not. With intuitive perception she felt that something was wrong. She endeavoured to ascertain the cause, and she, to her great relief, fortunately met, at the head of the staircase, Miss Clapham, who, having overheard the short conversation that had taken place, was hastening to seek her ladyship, eager to inform her that her daughter



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to hear and make a few comments on the past gaiety. But I was not prepared to hear all that I have just related, for I had not even observed Lord Neville's departure.

Sir Edward went to bed, but Lady Desborough did not move from the *fauteuil* into which she had thrown herself; Julia, on a similar seat, seemed wrapped in a delightful reverie, when her mother startled her and us by saying, "So, Julia, I hear you have occasioned a quarrel between Lord Neville and Mr. Frederick Wentworth?"

Up started Julia. "A quarrel! Oh dear, mamma, I hope not! What can you mean?"

"I mean what I say." And Lady Desborough repeated what she had heard.

Julia did not attempt to deny that such a conversation had taken place. Miss Clapham had reported faithfully.

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William was in the room. He advanced towards his mother. "I am sorry, mother, that you should thus strive and struggle, still more sorry to hear you confess that you have done so. I like Neville well enough, and I wish that Julia could have liked him, but, since she does not, she shall not have her inclinations forced."

"Mamma," began Julia, speaking in those measured, quiet tones habitual to her—"mamma, I do not love Lord Neville; I never can do so; and I hope you will excuse my declining to marry him, even should he offer to me, which, after to-night's scene, is not very likely."

Lady Desborough felt deeply this disappointment. Had William not been there, I believe she would have said much more; the presence of her son always checked her; but she said,—
"I conclude, Julia, you have formed some

foolish attachment to that Frederick Wentworth. I warned you against doing so. Remember, you can never marry him; I have told you that before. If it is for his sake you have thrown away this excellent opportunity of settling in life I will never forgive you."

A deep flush settled on the pale cheek of Julia as she replied, "My dear mamma, although no power on earth shall drive me into a match I dislike, yet I promise you I will not marry against your consent."

"Come, madam," exclaimed William, "that is very fair; say no more on the subject; let that satisfy you. Julia has a right to choose or refuse for herself; and she is young enough to wait until she can please herself. Come, Julia; go to bed." And he offered his arm to his sister to conduct her to her room.

"Good night, mamma," said the weary *Julia*, timidly approaching her mother.

Lady Desborough said "Good night," but it was with an ill grace. She was sadly disappointed. *Julia* and her brother disappeared; I still remained. *Fanny Random* was half asleep upon an ottoman, apparently occupied with some pleasant thought, for ever and anon she smiled.

Lady Desborough spoke loudly of her disappointment and regret. I could do little to soothe her, I was almost as sorry myself; but I stood and looked at her, and contemplated the scene around us, and moralised "a few."

I thought of the change an hour could make. I thought of the change a night had made—of the seeds of misery sown—of the dissension between two who had been brothers in heart as

well as in name; betwixt whom a harsh or bitter word had never before passed—of the sad evidence which had been afforded, that Julia loved young Wentworth.

I gazed at my cousin. What a troubled face!—so different from the smiling countenance of the elegant hostess of the gone-by *fête*. She looked ten years older, and, if I were not writing about a lady, I should say ten per cent. plainer. But ladies never are plain, therefore I shall say ten per cent. less beautiful.

The *leetle* touch of rouge she wore was as a spot of fire upon each cheek, so strong did it contrast with the general pallor of her face—the work of fatigue and anxiety. Ghastly was that contrast! So was the mockery of dress and jewels garnishing a form so weary, and shining on a heart so ill at ease. And there was addi-

tional mockery in the splendour of the apartment in which we were, fading, as it was, before our eyes—the wreaths of flowers decorating the room, each wreath worth gold, for the flowers were rare and profuse, momentarily withering—the tapers one by one becoming extinct—the more substantial glories of the saloon gradually disappearing from view beneath the deepening of the increasing gloom; then, as a climax, came the stealing light of dawn, actually creeping in at the crevices of the curtains, casting long gleams of pale light across the floor, polished by the feet of the dancers.

That finished the affair. Lady Desborough might remain if she liked to face the sun, which she knew was fast approaching, but I was going to do nothing of the sort, so I bade adieu in somewhat of a hurry; and Lady Desborough,

recalled at last, I believe, to a consciousness of the hour, and feeling some pity for the sleepy servants, who were waiting to put things to rights a little, and perhaps remembering that rouge had its aversion to daylight, rose also, and retired to her room.

For my part, I rushed with all haste to the "arms of Somnus." But, long before my head was at ease upon its pillow, I had heard that horrid cry of "Old clo'!" responded to by the only less horrid one of "Milk, ho!" resounding through the dreary streets.

It was long—to borrow a novelist's phrase—"before I awoke to a sense of my situation." When I did so, the first face that greeted me was that of William Desborough, who had been trying to wake me for some moments previous with "Come, get up, my good fellow; I want to talk to you."

"Well, well, William, don't be so impatient ;
ring the bell, and I will get up."

And so I did, for I felt I had a great deal to talk of and to think of that day. The first subject broached was that of Julia's repulse to Lord Neville. But—wonder upon wonder !—there had been another proposal made that night, and another rejection had been received ; and the hero of this affair was also a "great catch." The lady was Fanny Random, while the gentleman was no less a person than young Murray.

"Young Murray" was as fine a fellow as ever stepped, and almost as good a match as Neville. I had long perceived that he and Fanny were carrying on a quiet sort of flirtation, but I had no idea that matters were coming so quickly to a crisis. And what possessed Fanny to refuse him I could not understand.

Desborough had learned this from Julia, to whom Fanny had imparted the secret ; and he had, very goodnatureedly, come to apprise me of the fact.

As soon as we had breakfasted we returned together to May Fair, where I found things wearing a rather uncomfortable aspect. Lady Desborough looked severe ; Julia's eyes were red ; Sir Edward had gone to seek refuge in his club ; Fanny only, as cheerful and as *nonchalante* as ever, smiled upon the succession of scenes, past, present, or to come.

I had scarcely exchanged the ordinary greetings with the assembled party when the door opened, and Lord Neville was ushered in.

He looked solemn enough for any scene. The instant I caught sight of his face I wished myself at home again. He bowed slightly to

the majority of the party as he passed up the room, and, reaching Lady Desborough, he paused, declined to be seated, but begged to be allowed to speak with her alone.

She rose and led the way into an adjoining apartment, then closed the door behind them, and we were left, looking rather foolish, and feeling excessively curious as to the result of the pending deliberation. We could hear the soft murmured tones of the lady's voice, the deeper note of that of the excited suitor; we could hear the long sentence of expostulation, explanation, deprecation, the abrupt answer, question, or reply. But we could only catch the sound of all this, not the sense; and, though common decency required that we should appear as though we heard not even what we did, yet, finding all our attempts at keeping up, or even

at starting a conversation, futile, we at last resigned ourselves to an uneasy silence; and I verily believe, yet blush to confess it, that we all concurred in a strong wish and effort to distinguish, if we possibly could, something of the interesting confabulation going on in the next room. Certainly, when the door was flung suddenly open, we all started "like guilty things."

The door was opened by Lady Desborough, who said, "Julia, may I trouble you to come to me?" and then retreated from our view, leaving poor Julia to follow.

But she turned to me. "I will go if you will go with me, cousin John, not else."

"My dear Julia, you had better go alone."

"Shall I go, Julia?" offered William, but with a very bad grace, for he could not endure the thoughts of a "scene."

"No; I will have cousin John with me, no one else."

"Why, really, Julia——" I began, but Fanny interrupted me.

"Go with her, John. Remember, they are two to one against her."

"Fanny," I replied, "what a slang expression for a young lady to use!"

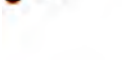
But I rose, and offered my arm to Julia, who took it, and we marched in state into the jaws of the lion. The lion bore an amiable aspect, but he soon began to roar.

The double battery opened at once upon us. I am getting very metaphorical; but I mean they both began to speak at once.

"Julia——" commenced Lady Desborough.

"Miss Desborough——" said the lover.

Julia looked first at one, then at the other,



and answered
why you have
spoke to, spoke
and waited, evi-
dence
his visit is upon
my nearly. He
I leave you to
doubt you will
reference he be-
come for him."
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shall not annoy
that I feared,
was not so pleas-
ant
very discrepant.

Lady Desborough blushed scarlet; but Lord Neville had not heard her words, nor understood her meaning, or he would not thus have exposed the affair at its very commencement to the spirit of contradiction.

Julia withdrew her arm from mine, and moved forward. Her manner was so calm and self-possessed that I was astonished. I had expected agitation—perhaps renewed tears.

“My dear mamma,” she began, “I wish I could please you. And, Lord Neville—will you believe me?—I feel most grateful for the preference you show me, and the honour you do me. I wish it was in my power to mark my sense of these by more than mere words; but they are all I can accord.”

“Julia!” exclaimed her mother.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a letter or document. The text is written in dark ink on a light background. The script is highly stylized and difficult to decipher. The text is arranged in several lines, with some lines being longer than others. The overall appearance is that of a handwritten document from the 18th or 19th century.



rough. I much regret that she should appear so insensible to your merits, and to the advantages of the alliance you propose, but I must acquit her of any charge of heartlessness or undue encouragement."

"Mr. Greville," said his lordship, somewhat haughtily, "I cannot think you have been constituted by circumstances a fitting judge between us. It is impossible to argue upon such a matter as this simply from external evidence. I tell you I have been cruelly misled."

Misled you have been, certainly, I thought to myself, that very old pun coming into my head at that moment. Lady Desborough spoke next, intercepting the reply I was about to make. Her mortification could ill be concealed; but she attempted a tone partly conciliatory, partly indifferent.

FAMILY.

this interview

Another time

listen to reason.

"said her lady-

fully away.—

"

he returned.—

you for your good

and pressed it

Desborough—

and he laid a

word "good,"

with such a

and manner,

annoyance where

pity.

without returning to

the drawing-room, where Fanny and William awaited the result of the conference. But we proceeded there, followed by Lady Desborough, who flung herself into a seat and burst into tears.

All stood aghast; but Julia was promptly at her mother's side.

"My dear mamma! pray, pray do not distress yourself. Indeed I could not help it. You would not have me marry a man I dislike. I have—I have promised I shall marry no one against your wishes. I beseech you let that suffice."

"No, Julia; I cannot forget this in a hurry. How I have hoped in vain! Ungrateful girl!"

"Indeed, mamma, I am not ungrateful. But I do not love Lord Neville, nor ever can I do so."

"Love!" repeated her mother, in a tone of great contempt.

"I cannot marry him," said Julia.

MILY.

Esborough—"if
preference for
connexion with
give you."

had retired to a
beside me. She
and whispered,
all men, could I
nothing of this to

ery at her. She
Nothing be-
the slightest

absorbed in her
this movement.
And so this was
the dream of love!
bought, "it hath

then come to this! Early, alas! hath the blight fallen upon thee."

William now broke in upon the conversation.

—"My dear mother, do not distress yourself about this affair; indeed there is no occasion for doing so. Julia is only in her first season. Surely you do not rate her so low as to think she will not be able again to command as good an alliance as the one she has just refused? Indeed, madam, you do not do her justice if you suppose so."

"And, moreover, there was another proposal and another rejection last night, as Fanny can witness," said I quickly, bethinking me of a sure method of changing the current of the conversation, and willing to take a little revenge upon Fanny, who was smiling away, as though we were not all in hot water.

"Oh, cousin John!" exclaimed the lady attacked.

FAMILY.

and Lady Des-

Fanny, explain

while William

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She had anti-

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of your senses.

, gently, "there

was nothing particular in it—nothing. It was only a commonplace offer. I own I ought to have informed you of it before; but I have had no opportunity of doing so. I would have acquainted you with the circumstance previous to my rejecting the gentleman, had he allowed me time; but he would not, he was so impatient. I was obliged to turn him off at once; and I am afraid I cannot give him a character towards his next situation.”

“Fanny, Fanny, don’t be so pert and giddy. You may consider yourself well off if at any future time you are favoured with an equally advantageous offer.”

“Pray may I ask, cousin Fanny,” I said, “why you rejected the gentleman?”

“Because I mean to marry no one under the rank of Duke. I intend to be a Duchess.”

ANILY.

Bravo! I ad-
miring well of
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My Julia, took
part in misfor-
tune on; a little
William, you

am.
The same Lady Des-
cended, "the troubles
anticipated. I
his office could I
appointments: and
exposes me the most
?"

CHAPTER IV

AND you, my beautiful Caroline; what were you about all this time?—was your sweet face never visible in the drawing-room in May Fair? Yes, sometimes, when we spent a quiet evening at “our house” (a rare event indeed), Mary Norton, Caroline, and their governess appeared among us. And Caroline, so very little younger than Julia and Fanny, looked quite as womanly as either; while Mary, with her tall, magnificent figure and profuse tresses, outshone them both. Certainly the two prettiest ones were yet to “come out.”

FAMILY.

in friends, and, confident of all the result of all her remarks, and conversant with the world around her, but for the present

between the "Ins" and the "Outs." There was no all the pomp of the name of fashion; the "Ins" clad so simply in slippers, hair scrubs, and the decoration of a single ornament. No; she was obliged to wear the dress which had presented her

Cousin William, during these happy evenings, was sure to be at home. If, on his entrance into the drawing-room, he found Caroline there, no power on earth could move him from her side. It was my amusement to tease him by reminding him of his neglected engagements; but it was no use, there he remained; and the nights of these evenings presented the unusual spectacle of the whole family being quietly in bed at the decent hour of eleven, for Lady Desborough was very careful of the complexions of her young charges.

One evening Fanny, Caroline, and myself were seated upon an ottoman nearly in the centre of the room, and which happened to be in a line with one of the great mirrors that filled the spaces between the windows. At a little distance sat the rest of the party—William

ILLY.

; Sir Edward
the last Whig
as Waters (the
contemplation of
ing or knitting,
talking rather
about Murray,
jects of the re-
s in the ears of
ending her own
ention of being
while Caroline,
with an amused
passed between

day will come
all live to see it,
and be two desolate

old maids, residing together, with four lapdogs
piece, both somewhat cross, somewhat sour,
and somewhat——plain.”

“Oh, you horrid man!” exclaimed Fanny.
“How can you be such a wretch?” And she
hid her face in affected horror.

But Caroline only repeated the words “deso-
late old maids!” and, rising, showed me by her
action what she thought of the prophecy.

She drew herself to her full height, and,
crossing before the great mirror, turned her
face full upon it as she passed, looking at me in
the bright image shining from its glassy depths;
then she returned to her place, and seated her-
self beside me, a meaning smile still quivering
on her lips.

This proud movement was yet a very natural
one, and certainly she could not have given a

better denial to the chance of my idle prognostication being realized; and there was much beside merely personal vanity glowing from the lovely face that met mine within the mirror; there was the consciousness of far more than beauty—the consciousness of mental power sufficient to compel circumstances to the formation of a happy fate. Caroline, with the knowledge of her own surpassing mind, felt as though all was within her grasp.

It was, as I said before, a proud, but a natural, action.

I looked at her when she returned with silent and perhaps too admiring or too affectionate regards, for she turned away her head from me, and blushed slightly.

Fanny laughed.—“Well, certainly, Caroline, you are the vainest girl! But, as cousin John

seems to admire your doings, I will imitate them." And Fanny, springing up, swept before the mirror, imitating every movement of Caroline's with an air the most bewitching and graceful in the world, repeating, as she did so, with her sweet, triumphant tones rather elevated, "Desolate old maids! Oh, cousin John!"

"Fanny, there is many a true word spoken in jest. Take warning."

These words issued from the pale lips of the sad-looking governess, and, as we did not think she had attended to or overheard our discourse, we all rather started at the sounds.

It is very strange, but I never forgot, and never could forget, my own foolish prophecy, and this its sort of half-confirmation.

This governess, Miss Waters, was a young

FAMILY.

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Major Waters
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long been out of
the brothers were
the major had
Harriet Waters,
alone through the
istence.

She was a nice, pretty person. She looked thirty instead of five-and-twenty; but hers was a fine, intellectual countenance, with a pair of melancholy eyes, and good dark hair. She was about the average as far as talent went, but she was highly accomplished and sensible, well-informed and well-behaved.

And here I will relate a circumstance that occurred in connexion with this governess, and which took place very shortly after the evening of this little scene.

My friend Manners invited me to dine with him in Harley-street, to meet some of the literati of the day; and thither I went.

There they were, a goodly band; no ladies, to my great relief, but a large party of men, among whom were our old friend the "Quarterly" editor, George Danvers, Brunton, and several others.

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...sions "Hum!
...ions;" I ought
...ions," anything
...it go.
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...s always, be-
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...or called upon
...or answer, or
...ing man, a cap-
...e manly fellow
...enty. How he
...agine, for he
..."lion" tribe: I
...the streets that

morning, and asked him to come—this was his usual way of getting up a dinner. However, there he was, eating and drinking quietly, and I cannot say opening his lips to much purpose in any other way, until I happened to become the amused listener to a conversation that took place between him and our host,

“I heard it,” said this son of Mars, speaking of some trivial anecdote of the day, “from our second major.”

“Ah! I heard it, I think, from a Miss Waters, whom I met one evening at Lady Desborough’s—hum! ha! h-m!” murmured our host, quite unconscious that the damsel in question resided with, and was governess to, Lady Desborough.

“Miss Waters, sir!” exclaimed Mars. “May I beg you to tell me who it is you speak of? I—I—I have friends of that name.”

FAMILY.

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th your friends,
woman in black

an tell me where
anxious to know."

Resides!—as if
I?—hum! ha!

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ough a very bright
be quite sure of

not trifle with me,"

ply interested in
your thoughts.

this turns out as
eagerly forward,

his eyes fixed intently upon the face of his confused interlocutor, who was now thoroughly frightened.

"My dear Captain Jones, do not be so impetuous. I never can remember if I am so hurried. My memory is not good; but I will try. Where did I say I met the young lady? hum! where was it? ha! hum!—hum! ha! h-m!"

"Oh! at Lady Percival's, I think you said," exclaimed Jones, who had never heard the name of Desborough before, and who had not managed to retain it now.

"Percival! Lady Percival's! my dear sir, I do not know her. But there are several families named Percival; to which do you allude? do you mean the baronet who lives in the county—you know which I mean—so famous for hops?—or do you mean——"



man, in
county.
dear Mr.
Waters in
ecatingly,
remember.
do know;
in blue:
a little
shall hear)
s—"
happy to hear
call me the

exact place, and give me the direction—I am really so interested.”

“Well! it was at some baronet’s—hum! ha! h-m!—The white soup was remarkably good. That man was there, you know, who wrote the book about shells, or fishes—I forget which; you remember it—hum! ha! h-m!—he has a queer name. And Sir James somebody was there, who lives at that nice place near the town where they sell gloves—you know where I mean—hum! ha! h-m!”

“Yes, I know, sir—Woodstock; pray go on.”

“She, and the man I mean, talked about the shell or the fish book—I forget which; and she said——”

“Thank you, sir, thank you!” interrupted the eager captain. “Tell me what she said?”

“Oh! she only said that the copy of the book

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the dress

ha! h-m!"

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I stepped

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scrape as

beginning

to say that he thought that after all he might be mistaken in the name, and that he could not be sure it was not a *Miss Walters*.

Captain Jones and I became great cronies immediately, and it touched me to see the agitation which moistened his dark eyes as he overwhelmed me with questions concerning *Miss Waters*, "the daughter of his kind old friend Major Waters."

He told me that he had returned from abroad with his regiment but a few months previous to the present time; that he had sought out the family of *Waters*, and had heard, to his astonishment, of their ruin and dispersion.

He told me that, before he left England, he had been quartered in the neighbourhood of their residence in Hampshire—that he had been most hospitably entertained there—that the in-

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with the hope
and time,
circumstance,
or to place

this hope at farther distance ; and either no correspondence had been kept up, or it had been broken off, or dropped. But, however this might have been, the result was, that, going out of England rather suddenly, he had left without being able to visit them to wish them farewell. During the later years that had elapsed, he had quite lost sight of his old acquaintances, but, returning to his country to take possession of his paternal estate, he had bethought him of the home in the neighbourhood of the New Forest where he had always been so welcome, and thither he proceeded.

But strangers were in the well-known halls, and beneath the hospitable roof, and the name of Waters was almost forgotten in the land. Although the result of his inquiries made him aware that the major was

whatever
were not in
communications to
him; and he
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lated.

when he
pretty girl—a
the pride of
coquette.
"proper" Miss

"young man," I
surely she
now that the
that touched
buoyant

I prepared him for a change. Five or six years of care and toil had done their work, and so I told him.

He coloured slightly as he replied—"I must always be grateful for her past kindness. I cannot allow poor Harriet Waters to remain a governess. Something must be done to make her happy and comfortable."

Manners sat and listened, and at last the truth of the matter dawned upon him; and, his ideas clearing, he began to comprehend that the young gentleman had really a deep interest in the young lady, and that his own absence and abstraction had caused him to play, unconsciously, a very cruel part.

"And so you knew the lady in black silk that I met at dinner somewhere?—hum! ha! h-m!"

you hear
well long

a friend
and Lady

er—hum!
ough he had

pon her, I
must always
of my dis-

air. I am
ish I had

been able to recollect sooner—hum! ha!
h-m!”

Captain Jones was amused at our host and his peculiarities; so was I; so was every one that had ever witnessed them.

I informed the gallant captain that I would prepare his way with Miss Waters—directed him as to the hour at which it would be most probable that he would find her at home—promised to assist him or her in any way in which I could possibly be of use.

Next morning I got up at an unusually early hour, for I knew that the Gothic habits likely to be those of the captain would bring him to “our house” certainly before the time I had appointed; and I was anxious to prepare both Miss Waters and Lady Desborough for the advent of the “gallant officer.” “Officers”

as ma-
worthy."
interviews with
very glad if
as Waters
and her more
should be
for a com-
renewal of
governances."

to Miss
to them;
recent, and shall
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long."
governess of

her coming visitor. I ascended to the school-room, where I knew I should find the trio; I knocked at the door with due decorum, and was answered by the methodical "Come in" of the governess.

Caroline, looking so fresh and radiant, was bending over her drawing. Mary's splendid figure and complexion appeared to great advantage; she was playing upon the harp. The pale governess was engaged in some mechanical piece of needlework.

"Carry and Mary," I began, "I come in the character of Mercury. Your aunt wants you both in her dressing-room."

Both the girls sprang up, and proceeded to obey orders. I opened the door for them, waited until they had passed out, then, closing it, returned to the work-table of the governess.

with a
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I have
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with such
distress,
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captain
to
to

but when she looked at me again her colour was changing and varying.

“It is very pleasant, Mr. Greville, to find oneself not altogether forgotten.” And she burst into tears.

Emotion, on a face usually so schooled to decorous composure, was beautiful to behold. The quivering lip, the swimming eye, the flushed cheek: these indeed were foreign to the countenance before me.

“Excuse me, Mr. Greville; but the gentleman you name was our intimate acquaintance in happy days—days gone for ever; and the mention of his name brings with it a flood of recollections quite overpowering. Forgive me!”

“Forgive you, dear Miss Waters! Pray believe that I sympathise most deeply with you; and I hope the renewal of this acquaintance,

increased
pleasant, as
is a com-
not be the

but one of

this natural
on and an
contradictory
—“ And,
gentleman
good quali-
was grateful

country, even if
; though
grateful that

he still remembers." And she paced the room with an excited look and manner.

"My dear Miss Waters," I said, "pray do not speak in that melancholy strain. Captain Jones has as much reason to rejoice in your continued and undiminished friendship, as you can have in his. Surely the obligation, or whatever you may call it, is equal."

"No, Mr. Greville," she replied, with energy—"no; it is not equal: great is the gulf between us. He is rich, I am poor. What we were, what we have been, is nothing; think of what we are now. Birds, passing with the summer, return not until summer comes again. The dreary winter is uncheered by song; and so with friends—so hath it been with friends."

This was a pretty simile for a governess. I

by a good
words, of
red-coated
ment of the
the time
Well, Miss
ing."
replied,

Writ-break-
signature, the
necessities
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in these
situation I
all kind-

ness; and may the God of the orphan reward those who have bestowed it. But I speak of the life in general—I speak of my own fate. You, who are independent, cannot imagine it—you cannot know what it is to toil for bread. And such toil! not the active manual employment, the healthful exertion, the stimulating presence of those we love nerving to double strength, but the monotonous, yet ceaseless, labours of the mind, wearying beyond conception, yet imperative. Then, when this labour ceases, how desolate are the lonely hours, the unsympathised-with thoughts of the governess! No one to turn to, no one to confide in, no one to say ‘I love you’! Oh! how many pangs we bear in seeing all around so happy, all so loving, so beloved, so linked—to hear the thousand words of endearment pass for

mother to
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hopeful, and nothing had occurred to make me weary of life, when its gates were so suddenly closed upon me, and I was driven from the world where I had been so glad a sojourner. I had never known a sorrow or a wrong until ruin came at once; and, following ruin, death. My father died of a broken heart; my brothers, far away, struggle against poverty; I work for the means of life; my friends!—they have fallen away.”

“Not *all*, Miss Waters.”

“I thank you, sir; I trust not. Pray forgive me, Mr. Greville. I have really acted most strangely in speaking as I have done; but you have always been kind to me. I have known you now some years, and the news you brought me has quite unnerved me. I feel I have acted perhaps a little unwarrantably.”

Miss
rely you
and; be-
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I beg."

you for

and the
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canceled and

It was
dially dis-

"let me
ollect your
to receive

I said this as I was leaving the room ; and I saw the governess, with a faint smile, turn towards the mirror as I spoke.

That was also a natural action. But how different were the feelings that prompted it on her part and on that of the beautiful Caroline, who so short a time before had acted so similarly ! How great was the contrast between the one, so young, so lovely, so brilliant, just on the glorious threshold of proudest life, and the other, so wan, so careworn, already so world-weary, young, yet with heart and spirit so old in sorrowful experience !

And the images in the mirrors ! were they not contrasted in all ways ? Joy and grief, smiles and tears, hope and fear : the hopeful springing forward to the future, the fearful retreating from the melancholy past.

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However, there she remained ; and sure enough, five minutes before the hour appointed, came the “rat tat tat” of the gallant captain.

For the present the curtain was dropped, and I was obliged to wait with great impatience for the *dénouement* of this little romance. It was so delightful, I thought, this “little romance,” taking place in “our house,” under my very eye, and owing chiefly to my own agency. It was just the sort of thing I liked to happen—quite my style !

It had its wind-up, like all romances, in a marriage, as you shall hear.

Within a week after this first visit, Miss Waters, with a good deal of circumlocution, much blushing and stammering, informed Lady Desborough that she was under the necessity of giving up her situation as governess in her

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the marriage of their sister. Her relations—distant ones they were—had deserted her in her affliction; and she, in her returning prosperity, shrank from the task of renewing the ties that had been so painfully broken.

Captain Jones had a sister, married to a city baronet, a rich man, who had something to do with tea, and a gracious invitation was despatched, through the medium of the captain, to this lady and her husband.

They came—a good, hearty sort of man, and a pretty woman, with a tolerable air. She was young, wore a pink bonnet, and seemed rather confused and puzzled by the incomprehensible difference that existed between herself and her hostess,—incomprehensible, because in rank they were precisely the same, yet in ideas and manners were so much apart.

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"Blessings be upon ye!" I thought—"Blessings on the honest love of that heart whose affection clothes its object in a loveliness that shall outlast the charms of face and figure! Blessings on ye both!"

That handsome captain, with his fine manly form, his ingenuous countenance, his honourable conduct, his unblemished character, his good fortune, his many advantages of person and connexion, his affluent condition, might have commanded an excellent match. He might have married some young, fashionable, rich, or titled girl; but he had the courage to be constant to a youthful predilection unsupported by aught of these, and to wed a governess. And, if a long prosperous life is sufficient reward for such praiseworthy conduct, he has that reward.

The governess and her sposo started on their honeymoon, after receiving splendid presents from their kind host and hostess and from the late pupils of the bride. The parting was not without tears, but they were shed by that bride, and they were tears of joy.

The season was now drawing to a close, and events seemed not to progress at all in the affairs of Lord Neville and Julia.

How she and Frederick Wentworth had accommodated matters we knew not. He had quitted town for his ship within a few days after the explosion caused by the proposal and rejection of his brother. During those few days the young lovers met but once—that was at a ball in Grosvenor-square. They danced together the prescribed *once*, and once only; but I have a shrewd suspicion that, during

that one quadrille, they settled the affairs of the nation to some purpose.

He went, and a sharp observer might have remarked an additional touch of paleness settle on the fading cheek of Julia Desborough, a deeper shade of seriousness become dark upon her brow.

But shade and seriousness might visit some people and might get admitted, but with Fanny it was always "not at home" to such visitors. *She* was never sad, and, even when I represented young Murray as dying of a broken heart, she would never sigh.

However, do not think she was unfeeling. Young Murray was not dying of a broken heart, and, strange to say, he and Fanny were as good friends as ever, dancing together constantly, and apparently as happy as possible.

“ You must know, cousin John,” Fanny would say, “ that, when first Mr. Murray proposed and I refused him, he was rather inclined to be sentimental, but I begged him to drop that style, and to continue my friend, and I promised to be always grateful for the honour he had done me ; and so now we are on capital terms.”

“ But are you not aware, Fanny, that, by such a line of conduct, you rather encourage his attentions, and that he is sure to offer to you again ? You will be obliged to have him.”

“ But I told him flatly that I would not, and never would.”

“ Well, we shall see. I should not wonder if you are not yet Mrs. Murray, of that ilk.”

“ I thought I was to be a ‘ desolate old maid ’ ?” said Fanny, silyly.

"If you are, it will be your own fault. *That* at any rate is a safe prophecy."

As for William, he continued his negative sort of attentions to Lady Anne Grantley, who added to her list of conquests this season by refusing the young Duke of Bothwell, one of the, or rather *the*, greatest matches of the day.

She, at the close of the season, was as fresh, as radiant, as supremely beautiful, as haughty, as she was when I first described her. Late hours and fleeting time seemed to make no impression on her splendid beauty, as all that rank and wealth could offer made none upon her heart. She, amid a striving, struggling, manœuvring crowd, full of petty aims, idle efforts, heartburnings, disappointments, jealousies, passed calmly on, above all this—the proud moon sailing amid a host of changing twinkling stars.

To her all homage was due, and she took it as her right. But Lady Anne, above all weakness, appeared also above all sympathy; and she seemed, as she glided on her lonely course, indeed the solitary-hearted.

If she felt preference for William Desborough, I believe she owned it not, even to herself. I also believe that, had her manner ever softened into any display of pleasure in his society, or of interest in his personal feelings, he would have "fallen in love" with her. But she was so cold, so proud! yet, in general company, so fascinating, because so brilliant, so much admired, so superior, that one almost loved her in spite of herself.

George Danvers had gradually discontinued his more pointed attentions to Fanny; he soon learned to perceive they were thrown away;

but he remained on the same good footing with the family, visiting constantly in May Fair, and enjoying the especial favour of the discriminating Lady Desborough.

But the season was nearly over. People began to rush out of town in all directions, and we were not the last to linger.

Fanny and Julia were engaged to spend a month in the summer with Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot. Tom's birthday had just passed, and he was now seventeen; this was his "last half" at Eton. The next October his father thought of sending him to Oxford.

Tom now considered himself "a man." His admiration of Fanny did not seem to decrease as he advanced in years; but she was as innocent of the truth as she had been at the com-

mencement of her reign. But, like a childish, silly thing as she was, she appeared to anticipate more pleasure during the month she was to spend at Wilmot Court than she had experienced during the whole gay routine of the past season.

“ Oh, Tom ! when we get to Wilmot Court you and I will play at billiards all day long,” was her constant exclamation whenever she encountered the Eton boy.

“ Oh, yes, Miss Random ; that will be delightful !” And this was all the youth could say.

A large party was to assemble at Holmesley—all sorts:—“worthy” baronets, “gallant” officers, “noble” lords, “learned” judges, “venerable” bishops and archdeacons, “lovely” ladies, “elegant and accomplished” ditto, with

enough "lions" and "lionesses" to enliven all these. George Danvers, of course; Anecdote Hamilton, Lawrence, Mrs. Duff: these were the leaders of the literati; the small fry it is needless to particularise.

Among the "distinguished guests" were the Duke and Duchess of Nollerton, and their only daughter the lovely Lady Anne Grantley; and Lady Desborough had invited the Carlingtons, and had had the cruelty to include Lord Neville in the invitation: he declined it, but his father and mother, and brother, the Templar, were among the guests at Holmesley.

I engaged to take Fanny and Julia to Wilmot Court, to remain there a couple of days, and to return thence to Holmesley. I lingered with the Wilmots longer than I had intended, and, when I did return, I found things

going very wrong indeed at Holmesley. Caroline and Mary, emancipated from school rule, were enjoying a sort of intermediate happiness before the time arrived that was to usher them into the great world. They began life amid all the delightful freedom of a large country house—that house their own home. And when I returned to the charge of my little girls, I found my dear Carry, in this half-fledged condition, receiving, and apparently receiving with pleasure, the homage of George Danvers.

Until this hour he had never seen Caroline; then she rose upon his vision in all her beauty, and I wonder not he was struck. But, oh, Caroline, that I had been there to save you! But when I arrived it had become too late. Short as was the acquaintance between them,

the chains were already forged, which, light at first as the threads of the gossamer, became at last, to one of them, the iron of a heavy fetter.

CHAPTER V.

CAROLINE, the moment she had been emancipated from the tutorage of her governess and masters, had flown to her favourite pursuits—those of reading and writing. In the great library of Holmesley, where, for the first time, she was permitted to range at will, she found, each day, new sources of delight. There she spent much of her time ; there George Danvers encountered her one morning—the morning after his arrival. And from that morning was dated the story of a fate.

That George Danvers was very fascinating I have already told my readers; that he was clever, well read, witty, really a superior man in point of intellectual attainments as well as natural gifts, may be inferred from the ease with which he had ascended to the place he held on the literary ladder, and the ease with which he retained it.

Caroline—so eager, so ardent, so enthusiastic, utterly ignorant of men from actual observation, thrown, at the very outset of life, into the society of one so charming—believed this man, so specious, to be all he appeared, or wished to appear, to be.

He was taken with her beauty; he was astonished by her brilliancy of conversation and superiority of intellect; he was amused by her enthusiasm; he was charmed by her unsophis-

ticated freshness and strength of spirit; he took pleasure in leading and guiding that inquiring nature into the paths it longed to penetrate. Books were then Caroline's idols: he taught her where to read with greatest profit and delight—he read to her aloud; and I will do him the justice to say no one could read aloud as he could do. Harder hearts than Caroline's would own the magical power of that voice, sweeter than music—of that intonation, so full of feeling, so faultlessly correct!

And Caroline had had a whole week of this while I had been wasting time at Wilmot Court, where I had no object in staying, and where, I verily believe, no one wanted me to stay.

If I had been at Holmesley from the beginning, I am convinced I might have done much

good : in the first place, Carry would not have been ferreting out old books alone in the library ; in the second place, such a morning as I have described, if it occurred once, should never have been permitted to occur again ; thirdly, fourthly, and fifthly, I would have moved heaven and earth to find means to make George Danvers appear to Caroline in his true colours. But when I came it was all too late. She loved him already, and anything I might have said would have been more likely to have drawn the links closer than to have had any contrary effect.

Once, when I hinted to Lady Desborough that I thought a very rapid intimacy had sprung up between her friend and her niece, she only replied,—

“ It will be an excellent thing for Caroline if

she creates an interest for herself in the mind of George Danvers. She seems bent upon a literary life, and he could do much to aid her in her efforts for distinction—or at least for emolument. George can wind F—— round his little finger.” (F—— was the great publisher of the day.)

And that was all the answer her ladyship vouchsafed to me; and this was said so calmly, as though there could be no chance of Caroline’s becoming really attached to this man.

I often think her ladyship was very obtuse in these sort of affairs. She never would take warning, nor would she ever believe that young people *she* had brought up could be so silly as to dwell upon their predilections “too deeply for their peace.”

“But, dear Jane, are you not afraid that

Caroline may learn to like him too well?" said I; "he is very captivating. I should not wish to see her the wife of such a person as George Danvers, charming as he may be."

"His wife! my dear John. What *are* you dreaming of? Why, Caroline, properly brought out, may make a brilliant match—she is so very handsome, she is so young, so clever, so perfect in most things! If she appear at once as a beauty and a sort of Corinne, all in thorough 'good taste' you know, I think she will make quite a sensation, and, if she plays her cards properly, may command a far higher alliance than she could have any reason to expect otherwise."

"But, Jane, suppose she becomes really attached?—suppose her heart is engaged?"

"Nonsense, John! Really you make me

quite cross. Heart, engaged !” And her ladyship’s tones were full of contempt.

“ Why should she be so foolish, John, as to think of such a thing ? Now, what can make you imagine Caroline likely to fall in love, as you call it, with George Danvers ? She may manage so much better !”

“ You talk, Jane, as though ‘ falling in love ’ were an act of volition. I think you expose Caroline to great danger in allowing her to be so much in the society of this gay friend of yours.”

“ Depend upon it, John, Caroline only encourages him because she knows he will be of use to her. I feel convinced she is quite safe in the course she is pursuing. George Danvers is most agreeable as a bachelor guest in one’s house, and I dare say has sufficient to support

himself creditably in his present position; but that he should dream of offering to a girl of Caroline's expensive style of education and habits, or that any one with her station and advantages should think of him, are things equally unlikely."

I despaired of making her ladyship understand that young people cannot always measure the amount of feeling that may be expended with safety, and that worldly considerations sometimes fail before the strength of nature.

Caroline said to me one day, when I was questioning her as to her acquaintance with Danvers, and trying to insinuate carefully that I did not think him a very desirable companion for one so young and unsophisticated as herself, —she said, smiling as she spoke,—

"You know my wishes, cousin John; you

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I shall find no difficulty in doing ; at any rate, there is nothing I would not *try*."

"But what has George Danvers to do with all these aspirations? We were talking of him."

Caroline blushed slightly as she replied, "He knows them all, and he has promised to aid me. He is my true friend. Pray believe this, John. I am afraid you are prejudiced against him; but, if you knew him as I know him, you would like him as much as I do."

"And he has promised to assist you?"

"Yes: he will instruct me in the style which will be most suitable for me to adopt; he will introduce me to a publisher, and will take care that I have justice done me. I consider myself most fortunate in making his acquaintance, or, rather let me say, gaining his friendship."

“ And pray, Carry, are ‘ styles ’ adopted according to people’s convenience or wish ? You speak as though a ‘ style ’ in writing was like a fashion in dress—a voluntary choice. I fancied, in my ignorance, that it was a gift bestowed—”

“ Genius,” returned Caroline, “ is a boon Heaven-given ; but genius is not at all a requisite now-a-days for those who aim at literary distinction ; a moderate cleverness may be—and that I think I may venture to hope I possess. But I have a contempt,” she added, “ for the present state of authorship, and for the taste of the reading public. I shall not have to make much effort to enable me to compete with the writers and to please the readers. The world is a goodnatured world, with patience unlimited, and with most capacious jaws that swallow anything.”

" Well, Carry, I trust you may succeed in all your wishes and efforts; and remember that I too have some influence in the literary world. Sometimes apply to me, Caroline; I would do more to serve you than this stranger is likely to undertake."

" You are very good, cousin John, and I thank you sincerely for your kind wishes. I will apply to you if I ever want a friend."

How proudly Caroline spoke!—"if I ever want a friend!" Proud words those.

Anecdote Hamilton's sobriquet became almost a mockery, for in our lively household, where there were always so many young voluble tongues at work, he literally never achieved an entire anecdote. Either he found himself interrupted by the entrée of some gay additions

to the party, bringing with them some bright original "anecdote," which quite overpowered his prosy recitals, or he found his auditors insensibly melt away, until it would have been ignominious to have proceeded, telling stories to poor old Miss Browne, who, being very deaf, never manifested any objection to linger listening on, or (and this was the more common case) he was never permitted to commence anecdotising, the flow of words being too great to admit of his edging in more than one at a time.

One morning, however, the only company left at home being Lady Desborough, myself, the Duchess of Brownlow, and some few other guests, the rest being all out in various directions, Anecdote Hamilton began—

"Lady Desborough, that Cachmere of yours reminds me of an anecdote——" A loud ring

at the door-bell announced the arrival of visitors, but he went on—

“It will be ten years next Christmas since I was walking with John Walter in the streets of——”

“Miss Clapham, your ladyship,” said Watkins, flinging open the door to admit the lady in question.

In she came, her silk pelisse rustling louder than any pelisse I ever saw or heard rustle before—in she came.

“My dear Lady Desborough, *how* are you?—I am so glad to see you!—and you, dear Miss Browne,—and the duchess also. What a treat!—all one’s friends at once. Mr. Greville—ah!—and Mr. Hamilton!—All well?—I conclude so,—looking *so* charmingly!” She paused to take breath.

“How do you do, Miss Clapham?” said every one at once, as all rose to welcome the chatterbox, shaking hands with a most unusual show of cordiality. Every one was glad to see her, or rather to receive the interruption to the “anecdote.”

Imagine the general dismay when she turned to Mr. Hamilton with—

“You were speaking, I think, when I entered—telling some delightful ‘anecdote,’ I dare say. Pray do not let me interrupt you; pray proceed.”

“But, Miss Clapham,” said the duchess, “we want to hear the news from *you*: have *you* brought us no gossip?”

“I was telling Lady Desborough,” began Hamilton, speaking at the same time—“I was telling Lady Desborough an anecdote concern-

ing a Cachmere shawl. It will be ten years next Christmas——”

“ A Cachmere shawl! Ah, that is such a beauty your ladyship wears!”

“ Yes, and that reminded me of the anecdote.”

“ Really? Well, pray tell it us! I am dying to hear it. But, Miss Browne” (and here she elevated her voice to a considerable pitch, for the person she addressed was as deaf as a post), “do you know that your friend Mrs. Simpson has lost that necklace she brought from Paris in the spring?—I beg your pardon, Mr. Hamilton, but your mention of a shawl reminded me of it.”

“ Dear me!” replied Miss Browne, who had not heard one word.

“ Indeed?” said some one else.

"Yes, and she thinks it dropped off her neck in the lobby of the Opera-house. Such a pity!—wasn't it?" And she turned again to Hamilton, who proceeded.

"I was walking with John Walter in the streets of——"

"*One* moment," interrupted the lady. "Talking of John Walter, *do* you remember his sister?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do. And we were saying that day——"

"Well, but I met her last week at Wilmot Court, and she told me her husband had lost a large sum in some mining speculation; not that *they* miss it. But it was singular that I should have met her so lately, and that you should be talking of her brother when I entered now."

"Very singular, ma'am," replied Hamilton, rather sulkily, and resuming: "And Walter said to me——"

"Oh, but I have not quite finished. She had on, my dear duchess, *the* most lovely satin! I cannot quite describe it to you—all colours, and so rich! 'My dear creature!' I said, 'where *did* you get that satin?'

"'John chose it for me at Nourtier's,' she replied. Now, Mr. Hamilton, *isn't* it *very* singular that we should be speaking of her brother then, and that I should happen to enter just now, and find you speaking of him here?"

No reply.

"Well, Mr. Hamilton, are we not to hear the remainder of that story you were telling us?"

Hamilton resumed.—

“ I had told you, I think, that we were walking in the streets of Berlin——”

“ Talking of streets,” exclaimed Miss Clapham, “ did you see in the paper that the mayor of some town—Chester, or Huntingdon, or some such place—has prohibited any one from whistling in the streets, and means to fine those who disobey? * Delightful idea! isn’t it? I was so amused, and so glad. People *will* whistle in the streets everywhere, and sometimes the noise is horrid; and, moreover, frightens one’s horses. And, by the by—I beg pardon, Mr. Hamilton—by the by, *have* you heard that Mr. Beeswing’s match with Miss Donaldson is all off?”

“ Oh, no, that is new; *do* tell us!” from every voice in the room except poor Hamilton’s.

“ And all on account of Mr. Beeswing’s

getting into a passion one day. Mr. Hamilton's mentioning carriages put me in mind of it."

"I never mentioned carriages, ma'am!" said Hamilton, who was becoming savage.

"Horses, then; you said something about horses: *that* reminded me." Hamilton's denial of this assertion was drowned in the lady's continued flood of words. "Everything, you know, was settled: the carriages ordered, the family diamonds reset, the house taken—that house in Cavendish-square; everything complete, even the dresses made; and *such* a *trousseau*! the most lovely handkerchiefs—when it all went off!"

"But why? but why?—tell us why?" was echoed all around.

"I suppose I must tell you, you seem so anxious to know. But I feel quite ashamed of

interrupting Mr. Hamilton's dear anecdotes, they are so delightful always. But it was this : something went wrong about a piece of furniture—a mirror, I think ; and when it was sent home it did not fit the space that had been left for it. Mr. Beeswing and Miss Donaldson and her mother were together in the house at the time—she had gone to choose where she would have some pictures hung—and, when he found out the mistake about the glass, he flew into a violent passion, and flung his cane at the mirror, and if he did not break it it was not his own fault. And Miss Donaldson—you know what a quiet girl she is—stood by, and never said one word, and watched through the whole scene—a very disgraceful one they say ; and, directly she got home, she wrote him a note, telling him she would never marry him after such an exhibi-

tion of temper ; and so, you understand, it was all broken off."

" Well, I never !" and, " Dear me, how very odd !" and, " Of all the reasons !" and, " Who would have dreamt of such a thing ?" went the round of the room.

" And now, dear Mr. Hamilton. Oh ! but I forgot ; the best part is to come."

" Oh, that's right, Miss Clapham ! please go on ; do tell us all." (From the duchess, who abominated the anecdotes.)

" And, you must know, Beeswing had sent her a present of a beautiful horse—such a pretty creature—and so nicely broken in—such a canter ! and it cost a great sum, I forget how much—a hundred guineas, or two hundred, I am not quite sure ; and, when she had sent the note to break off the engagement, she then re-

turned him all his presents, and this horse among the number, which was the most valuable thing he had given her; and when the groom brought it Mr. Beeswing was informed of its arrival; and when he was told, he said, 'Very well; let the groom take it into the yard, and wait until I come:' and of course the groom did as he was desired and waited; and as he saw Beeswing enter the yard, and advance towards him, he thought of course he was going to give him half a sovereign at the very least; when, lo and behold! he draws a pistol from his pocket and shoots the poor animal through the head. What do you think of that?"

Even Hamilton condescended to look a little interested in this "anecdote," while all around were heard exclamations of—

"What a wretch!"—

“What a monster!”—

“Now, did you ever?”—

“Well, really!”—

“Of all the brutes!”—

while Miss Browne, who saw a good deal of animation in the faces around her, and concluded it to proceed from listening to the recital of some good story, wound up the remarks by murmuring — “How delightful!—quite charming!”

A pause followed this spirit-stirring tale, which enabled Hamilton to begin again.—

“We were walking in the streets of Berlin, John Walter and I, when we met a Jew pedler; and he said, ‘Gentlemen, do you want a very handsome shawl?’ and I——”

“May I ring for my carriage, Lady Desborough? Thank you, Mr. Greville. Dear Mr.

Hamilton, how sorry I am I must go ; but the next time perhaps you will tell me about the Jew. Ah ! but don't you remember you told us an anecdote about a Jew at dinner at Stanwell one day ?”

“ Certainly not, madam,” replied the gentleman, with dignity. “ I have another ‘ anecdote ’ about a Jew, which I shall be glad to repeat to——”

“ Ah, I shall be so delighted ! Another time : now I have not a minute to spare. But you have been *so* amusing, Mr. Hamilton—you always are : such a charming companion ! Good morning—good morning—good by, all—pray don't move, Mr. Greville—Mr. Hamilton—I beg—really, Mr. Greville, you are *too* good—adieu, adieu !”

These last sentences were uttered as Miss

Clapham was leaving the drawing-room and in her transit thence to the door, the last words of all being half lost, for she was ascending the steps of the carriage at the time; but the murmured sounds only ceased when the noise of the moving wheels absorbed all other noises.

The moment she had turned her back Mr. Hamilton broke out.—

“Of all the odious women! I beg pardon, Lady Desborough; perhaps she is a particular friend of yours—perhaps you like her: there is no accounting for tastes. If I was a married man, I would never speak to my wife again if she visited that——” (He stopped, as if no epithet was strong enough.) “I thank my stars, I am a single man. She cannot come and call upon me. Did you ever, madam,” addressing the duchess, “meet with such a bore? No

one can speak but herself. She lets no one get a word in: such a tongue! And then her 'anecdotes' are always so commonplace and prosy. Really quite dreadful. Such a bore!"

"I have known greater bores, Mr. Hamilton, than even poor Miss Clapham," carelessly remarked the duchess.

Hamilton paced the room for a few moments to regain his serenity; then, seating himself in his "anecdotising" attitude, gave very decided signs of an intention of recommencing, or rather resuming, his persecutions. But the ladies all drew together, reminding me of a flock of sheep in a storm; and, by entering into a brisk and pauseless discussion respecting the merits or demerits of Miss Donaldson's case, contrived so far to avert the evil hour, that the "anecdote"

was never told until late that evening, when the curate, who happened to be dining at Holmesley, was inveigled into a distant corner of the saloon, and compelled to listen. Besides the curate, that day there were others of the natives at dinner. Among these, a family named Manly. He was a respectable squire in the neighbourhood, and a sworn "fox-hunter."

Truly he was an odd character. He afforded me more amusement than any one among the natives that ever came to Holmesley. Born a gentleman, and moving in the best society of the county, he yet had, from constant association with grooms, huntsmen, gamekeepers, and that genus, acquired a great roughness of manner. His voice was one of the loudest I ever heard, and its tones in the gentle atmosphere of the drawing-room were

not much more modified than when their cheery notes would ring through copse and covert. Every time he opened his lips I started, for I thought the commencing bellow could end in nothing but the view halloo: never was heard such a noise. Then his figure, —tall, erect, wiry; a face with good aquiline features, bronzed to the deepest hues; straight hair, once jet-black, now slightly grizzled; garments always five years at the very least behind the fashion—a dress-coat with long pointed tails descending in the stiffest, most unnatural way—flat shining buttons, a yellow waistcoat, exactly like one our gardener wore every Sunday. He was a funny figure! Then his phraseology, his dialect—so broad and countrified; his manner, savouring strongly of the old régime—so obsequious to the ladies, so particular on the score of drinking

healths and paying all necessary devoirs in that line. As for describing him with due justice, that I am afraid is beyond my power.

He happened to be seated next the duchess at dinner. She always contrived this; she was fond of his society. He amused her as much as he did me; and she liked him for other reasons—for his good heart, his honest, honourable nature, his kindness to all about him—kindness that extended itself to the meanest helper in his stables, and to the dumb animals—the beasts that perish (foxes, you know, are beyond the pale of all charity)—that ministered to his amusement. I always respect men, and believe them to be good fellows, when they are kind to their dogs and horses; and such was Manly. He was rather deaf, and the duchess happened to be placed on his deaf side. It added to the enter-

tainment he always caused us, that on this particular occasion he had to twist his head completely around to bring his sharp ear in a line with her grace's lips. From the opposite side of the table, the view presented on these occasions reminded one of the story of the "Turned Head."

His politeness, which was, as I have said, very great, also influenced him to lay down his knife and fork every time he replied; so, poor fellow, I began to be afraid he would get no dinner; when her grace, most likely on purpose, entered into conversation with myself, and left Manly time to lay in a tolerable stock of roast beef.

Manly denominated all ladies as "Marm." He never entered into the little distinctions of title. Sometimes he would recollect himself

sufficiently to call his hostess "My lady;" but that was generally after he had heard some one of the servants address her in that style.

On the day in question he was "marming" at a great rate.—

"Marm, may I have the honour of a glass of wine?"

The duchess's assent obtained, Mr. Manly, as he raised his glass, bowed profoundly to her.—"Your good health, marm."

Then, turning to his hostess, "May I be allowed to drink your very good health, marm? and also Miss Desborough's, marm?—absent, but not forgotten."

"Thank you, Mr. Manly—thank you."

"Ah, my leddy!" (that was his mode of pronunciation)—"ah, my leddy! these great girls about one make one look precious old: it

seems but a little time, marm, since you and I were footing it away together in the Canterbury ball-room, as frisky as two-year olds; yet here we are with children taller than ourselves, and, mayhap, grandchildren soon." (A very severe look from his wife accompanied these remarks, but did not check him.) "There 's my good lady, marm, is always saying—'Manly, why do you talk about people's age?' But I tell her,—'Where 's the use of trying to be young, when one's boys and girls conspire to make one so old?' Ah, marm! in the days I speak of—the good old times—one danced country-dances, not your new-fangled French quadrilles and waltzes; and many a time have I watched your leddyship lead off to the tune of 'Garry Owen.'"

"That is long ago, indeed, Mr. Manly," in-

terposed Lady Desborough, willing to interrupt this speech in any way.

"'Tis indeed, my leddy, as you say, long ago. But, marm, you bear your years uncommon well, I may say, marm."

This sentence produced a hearty laugh from Sir Edward; but her ladyship was too goodnatured to do anything but smile a reply.

I haven't a doubt that Mrs. Manly, who liked dining at Holmesley, and meeting dukes and duchesses, better than anything in the world, bestowed a curtain lecture upon her husband before she allowed him to form any connexion with Somnus that night. However, nothing checked him now.

"Another of your old partners was here to-day, Mr. Manly," said the duchess—"Miss Clapham." Manly laid down his knife and fork,

twisted his head, put his hand behind his ear, and awaited her grace's repetition of the sentence.

"Miss Clapham was here to-day, Mr. Manly."

"Ah! the mark's been out of her teeth a precious time, I should guess."

"An old nuisance!" muttered Hamilton, from the lower end of the table.

"She was twenty the same day that I broke my bay mare's knees, and that's thirty years ago next week. I know her age to a day. She has a few years the advantage of your leddyship, or rather, I suppose I should say, the disadvantage. She is the elder of the two."

"And pray," demanded his hostess, "how do you happen to be able to chronicle her age and the bay mare's misfortune so exactly?"

"Because," replied Manly, "she and I were uncommon friends in our youth, and it happened we were riding together one day in August, and she had just been telling me it was her birthday, and that she was twenty (she would not mind telling her age then), and I had just screwed myself up to the leap, when my mare came down upon her knees."

"Seeing you could not conveniently kneel yourself, the mare thought to plead your cause for you," said Sir Edward.

"I grieved much for poor Bess, for she was a favourite animal; and, as I looked upon Miss Clapham as the origin of the accident, I never could endure her after: but I remember the date perfectly, and by it I know the leddy's age."

"And what do you mean by screwing your-

self up to the leap, Manly?" inquired Sir Edward.

"To that which at best is but a leap in the dark," replied the fox-hunter. "Matrimony. I meant to make her an offer of Manly House, with all the covers, preserves, &c. &c., appertaining thereto."

"Poor Miss Clapham! what a loss she had, and all owing to the bay mare's missing her footing."

"Poor girl!" sighed Manly, laying down his knife and fork, and gazing with a meditative air into his plate. "I was very sorry for her. I turned her out in the Holme Copse, but she was never fit for work again; and, as though Fate was against her, she got cast in a ditch and broke her leg in her struggles to free herself, and I was forced to have her shot."

"Shot!" inquired the duchess, with an affected air of horror—"shot! Miss Clapham. shot?"

"Miss Clapham!" returned Manly, with a look and voice of great contempt. "No! Bess—poor Bess!"

Mrs. Manly had not looked particularly pleased during this conversation.—

"Really, Mr. Manly, how you do run on. Your grace must not attend to everything he says. He makes a good story out of a very little."

"It gives me great pleasure always to listen to Mr. Manly," replied her grace. "His anecdotes afford me so much entertainment."

"Talking of anecdotes," said Hamilton, "did your grace hear the anecdote I was telling Miss Browne this morning connected with bear-hunting in Sweden?"

"I had that pleasure, Mr. Hamilton," returned the duchess, who had heard nothing of the kind.

Hamilton looked very black. I believe he knew as well as she did that she was telling a white—fib.

"And so, marm, they say Beeswing has shot that fine grey horse Miss Donaldson rode?"

"Yes, it is a fact; a strange fancy certainly."

"Ay, you may say that. How any man could make such a fool of himself. Shoot a valuable horse like that because a girl jilted him! It's beyond my comprehension."

"I am afraid poor Anna Donaldson must feel for the fate of her gallant grey; she was so proud and so fond of it."

"She could not have been very 'fond' of the

donor," cried some one, "or she would not have given him up so easily."

"I do not wonder at her conduct at all," remarked Lady Desborough: "after such a display of temper on the part of Mr. Beeswing she could no longer feel anything but contempt for him. If there is one thing more decidedly ill-bred than another, it is allowing oneself to lose one's temper."

"Yes," said her grace; "I agree with you. Had there been no witnesses to his folly, it would have been a different matter; but I understand there were upholsterers and all sorts of people in the room."

"So I understand. What a goose he must have looked when he received the lady's note—'Sir, you cannot behave properly, and I cannot undertake to teach you manners!'" Henry

Wentworth said this, and a general laugh followed the remark.

“And you, Miss Desborough,” I heard George Danvers say, addressing Caroline—“if *you* loved a man, who you felt loved you, would *you* resign him at the first symptom of a faulty disposition he might manifest?—would *you* expect perfection in any one?”

And I heard Caroline’s reply.—

“No, Mr. Danvers ; loving once, I shall love always ; and, having given my heart, I feel I could not withdraw it. The one that I should choose in prosperity I should not desert in adversity ; the one that I should choose when all was sunshine and brightness I should not turn from when clouds or storms arose, even though his own fault or weakness wrought the evil.”

"Just like you, Miss Desborough!" I heard that insidious voice reply. "Just like you!—generous, noble, truly good; yours the true charity—caring for others, thinking not of itself."

And, oh! how grieved was I to see the earnest, earnest glances that passed from eye to eye, speaking more plainly than words could do, telling such a tale.

"She must be precious glad, marm, that she has got rid of him since this affair, for the man that could shoot such a horse would not think much of treating his wife in a similar style if the fancy took him. Where's the difference? I wouldn't be that man's wife if I were a woman."

Something in the idea of Mr. Manly's being a woman made the duchess laugh very heartily.

“Manly, don’t you long for winter?” inquired Sir Edward.

“I shall be content when the first September comes, Sir Edward. I confess I *do* count the hours. Miss Desborough, marm, I hope you will join us sometimes in the field?”

“Perhaps I shall accompany my uncle or William to cover occasionally; further than that I cannot promise,” answered Caroline. “Mary is the great rider.”

By Mary she meant Mary Norton, who was indeed a good rider, sitting her bay Arabian with the perfection of graceful *horsemanship*.

“Pray, Mr. Lawrence,” inquired Henry Wentworth, “what is your opinion of the new sporting novel?—‘The Cheltenham Steeple-chase’ is the title, I think.”

“Why, it was reviewed in my journal very

favourably, but I thought it great trash myself."

"And is that the way you do business, my good fellow?" laughed Wentworth.

"The author is a friend of Norwood's, and Norwood asked me to admit a favourable review, and of course I assented; but, if the specimens extracted into my journal are the best parts of the book, they do not say much for the rest. I never read the work, or saw any of it save those same extracts."

We were all amused at this honest confession of one of the tricks of the trade.

"Then, Mr. Lawrence," asked the sweet tones of Caroline, "if we all turn authors, will you review us all favourably?"

"That I will, indeed, Miss Desborough. I will myself review *you*, when you write."

"I certainly did not admire those extracts, Mr. Lawrence," said Wentworth; "in fact, I have read the novel, and consider it very poor."

"Obsolete slang," pronounced the oracular editor, "with much vulgarity, unredeemed by wit, which can cover such a multitude of sins."

"So it struck me, Lawrence; yet, as I saw it praised in your 'Review,' I fancied it must be clever, and I tried hard to think so too; but I cannot endure those long conversations carried on between grooms and stable-boys, the whole point of which consists in leaving out or putting in the *h*, and in substituting *v* for *u*. Pray who wrote the review?"

"I believe the author himself," answered Lawrence.

This caused considerable merriment.

"Pray, Lawrence, do you ever write critiques yourself?"

"Not that style of critique."

"No, indeed," said Brunton, who had scarcely spoken during the late discussion—no: those who wish to judge of Mr. Lawrence's style must not read the favourable criticisms."

"I am sure, Brunton, you speak feelingly; now tell me, there's a good fellow, did I ever cut up anything of yours?"

"Yes, that you did; and that also in the last number."

"You cannot mean 'Ione'?"

"Yes," growled Brunton, after a moment's pause, "I do mean 'Ione.'"

"My dear fellow! why did you not let me know you wrote that book?"

"And in return, may I ask, how did it happen you did not know my style?"

"And so, Brunton," interposed Danvers, "you have been publishing anonymously?"

"I have for once, just for a freak."

"And a very foolish freak it is for a tried author to indulge in," said Lawrence, "and seldom, if ever, succeeds. The public believes a book to be good if ushered in with an established name upon its title-page. People are prepared to like before they read; but an untried author is always open to much malicious criticism: darts, that fall pointless from the rhinoceros-hide of a favourite writer, pierce fatally a struggling reputation. Moreover, an author, by a freak such as yours, always loses some friends; those with whom he is a favourite are those who are always most bitter against

himself *incog.* ; and then, when the cheat is discovered, how 'sold' people are when they find they have been lashing away at their friend so-and-so, instead of at some imitating interloper : they ever afterwards feel a little sore at having manifested such a want of discrimination, and a little angry at the cause of the soreness. My dear Brunton, pray believe I would not have admitted a line against you had I only known. Let me know the next time, and I'll make up for it. But you were asking, Wentworth, what I generally do myself in the journal. I will tell you. When you read a long elaborate criticism upon some 'sterling work,' as such books are called, careful memoirs of some really great man, historical or scientific works—a long elaborate criticism, which cavils at phrases, exults over defects of style, boggles at words, detects

with lynx-eyed keenness, and triumphs in detecting, the slightest dereliction from grammatical precision, sneers at warmth of opinion, censures *de bon cœur* where censure is due, 'damns with faint praise' where praise cannot be withheld, meets with biting sarcasms the early affectations of genius running riot through exuberance of fancy, finds fault, in fine, where and when it can,—*that* article, Wentworth, will most likely be by your humble servant."

"My dear Lawrence, you make a great ogre of yourself by your own account."

"It is my style, Wentworth, and I cannot help it. Perhaps, Miss Desborough, the best thing I can do will be *not* to review your work when it comes out."

"Why, you speak as though Caroline was on the eve of authorship. Caroline, I don't be-

Have you ever wrote a line. Tell the truth;
have you ever done so?"

Caroline laughed.

"Yes; it is not so long ago since I wrote French exercises."

"What a jesuitical answer! However, don't blush. I'll not ask you to confess all your sins."

"I am father confessor, am I not, Miss Desborough," murmured the soft voice of George Danvers, "to all misdemeanors of that nature?"

Caroline's reply was only a smile—so sweet a smile!

I was still watching its departing light, when Lady Desborough made a little bow to the duchess, who made a little bow in return, and the ladies rose to retire.

Manly charged his glass in all haste as he perceived the movement, and gave the toast, "The Ladies!" in a cheerful sort of roar, that made them all start as they rose from their seats. However, they smiled their thanks to the gallant squire, who, as he lifted her grace's glove from the floor and presented it to her, said—

"Going so soon, marm? always sorry to see the ladies quit the field. Soon be after you, marm; some of the young 'uns I see already on the scent" (alluding to William and another who happened to be standing gazing after the retreating band of feminines). Then, as the last petticoat disappeared, he flung himself back in his chair.

"Now, my boys, bumpers round! And will no one give us a song?"

This latter request was not complied with, but, nevertheless, we had a jolly half-hour, for the squire was in an amusing vein, and entertained us with various accounts of "capital fields," "glorious runs," "splendid bursts," and so forth, until one by one his auditory had all faded away.

When I entered the drawing-room, Mary Norton was singing to the harp; Caroline and George Danvers were playing at chess; William, poor William Desborough, looking, for the first time in his life, almost unhappy, was gazing at this couple with a look that showed that he too had become enlightened as to the state of feeling existing, or soon to exist, between them, and showed also how deeply this enlightenment was likely to affect his peace.

CHAPTER VI.

THE dreary winter months were passed in all sorts of savage amusements, such as "killing poor innocent dicky-birds" and "hunting sweet little hares and foxes" (I quote Fanny Random); and we were soon afterwards all safely and soundly housed in the mansion in May Fair, with our four beauties assembled therein,—Julia and Fanny at the commencement of their second season, Mary and my Caroline on the more important threshold of their first entrance into life.

The party we left last summer at Holmesley soon dispersed, one in one direction, another in another. George Danvers went at last (I had begun to think he never would go; he stayed a month), and Careline was once more left to my guidance.

But, oh, how changed was she! how changed in all! A year in age was added to her appearance, many to her heart and mind. She loved George Danvers; and, beneath the influence of that early passion, her nature, with her affections and her hopes of happiness, expanded to their full extent; and, their destinies fulfilled, they withered for evermore.

He deceived her; but perhaps he knew not all the wrong he wrought. Selfish, cold, calculating himself, he estimated not the depth and strength of the feelings that he might arouse

in others; least of all in that burning heart whose pride could keep it silent, even while its agony struck at the very springs of life.

One thing I do believe; if ever George Danvers loved, he loved Caroline; and at first I believe his passion for her was so great that he would have married her had their union made them, from the moment of its completion, beggars and outcasts. I believe that, under the influence of this love, he, during their early acquaintance, used every art to make himself beloved in return, and declared his intentions—rather his hopes and wishes—in every way that he could, without actually entering upon a proposal to her, which, at so early a stage of their intimacy, would have appeared a preposterous act to Lady Desborough, and even to Caroline herself.

Then I believe that, ere the time came that

would render such an act less preposterous, his views had altered altogether. His love for her remained, but his usual selfishness and worldly-mindedness had returned to show him the folly of wedding a portionless girl; and he relinquished his design, perhaps with some struggles with his love—certainly without one thought of all the sorrow he had created for the one only being he ever loved. For Caroline believed, trusted, loved him with a tenfold depth of passion—with a devotedness that he could never feel.

Caroline had no confidant then; all she felt, and hoped, and suffered, she hid in her own heart; but, since, she has told me all, and, gentle reader, all that she told me I am now telling you.

At first, beneath the infatuation of this pas-

sion for the most perfect creature he had ever met, all those prudent and cautious considerations which had been his rules throughout life vanished like snow before sunshine ; and, longing for nothing so much as for Caroline as his wife, he thought of nothing but the means of gaining her.

Every word he said, every look, betrayed his hopes ; and Caroline, believing all would be steadfast as it was manifest, dreading not change, gave in return the whole affection of her most intense and steadfast nature.

That month of close companionship—that month at Holmesley—spent in that dim, old-fashioned library, in those picturesque halls, those wide saloons, made beautiful by all that is most precious in art—those saloons, full of costly pictures, statues, memorials of brighter

countries and eras, time-hallowed associations—spent in wandering amid those sweeping glades, those verdant, summer-clad pastures, those gay gardens, those “close-pleached” shrubberies—that happy month! How strange that those thirty days should have had the power to poison with their remembrance the many future years of a long and prosperous life!

Ere the first week was over, George Danvers's views were altered; he saw that Caroline would have accepted him, and, thinking seriously upon the matter, he felt that he could not “sacrifice himself” to a girl, however charming, without money; one, moreover, brought up amid all the luxuries that money could procure.

The visions of domestic happiness—the first he had ever entertained—became over-

powered by the returning force of his old habits of calculation and selfish carefulness; and then, with him, affection, passion, all natural feelings, were very much under the control of this calculation and carefulness. So he surmounted the new feelings born within his heart, and only smiled while meditating on the gone-by dream—at the idea of *his* ever having entertained such romantic notions.

He had certainly entertained another notion, not quite so romantic—that Fanny Random would do very well for him, or rather Fanny's very handsome fortune; and he certainly laid siege to her, as I have already shown. But he had tact enough to perceive the small chance he had there, and he prudently gave up the attempt at pleasing Fanny. His love for Ca-

roline—the love that yet remained—still kept him entirely her devoted admirer; and he, a heartless man of the world, began to calculate upon the advantages that might accrue to him from her continued affection. She would be sure to marry; doubtless she would marry well. Her house, her establishment, her dinners—these would suit him admirably, for they were certain to be quite in “his style.” Nay, the sensual Danvers perchance went further, and thought of my dear Caroline as the partner of one of those cold-blooded *liaisons* which men of his stamp contrive shall always be maintained between themselves and a woman whose houses, establishments, and dinners are just what they “ought to be.”

Caroline confided to him all her hopes, dreams, and aspirations—her longings after

independence acquired by her own exertions—her proud reliance on her own powers.

He heard, and approved, and offered her all assistance. He engaged her to keep up a correspondence with him, to which she acceded with a flutter of delight. “When we meet again, Caroline,” he said, “it will be, I trust, to part no more.” But that was said before he had quite resolved that such a marriage would never do for him.

And those words, that implied so much, were dwelt upon, remembered, recurred to—accepted as the pledge of an honest passion. And often, when the truth became apparent to her, did these words recur to her own doubting yet hoping heart, as assurances that all was yet to end well—that he would yet return to keep his faith, to redeem this pledge,

The day he left Holmesley I remember well. I watched for Caroline, but she appeared not, to wish him farewell; nor did he, as he shook hands with the assembled group, seem to perceive her absence. Their adieus were doubtless over; and Caroline, at that moment, perchance was weeping, in the solitude of her own room, her first bitter tears.

From that day she was a changed girl, as I have said. Her whole soul seemed concentrated upon his memory and upon her own hopes in life. She read and wrote incessantly. And though we were wont to try and wile her from her occupations, it was without avail; she seemed to set herself a task, and then no entreaties, no coaxing, no quizzing, could move her from her little desk.

She began to write in earnest that she might

please her lover; she ended by writing that she might triumph over the perfidy that she perceived too late.

Their letters!—he could write a beautiful letter; so could she. She long kept his, as I know that he did hers, though from a different motive; *his* fed *her* love—*hers* flattered *his* vanity. They came, at first, very often, those letters of his. I knew the handwriting, and I hated it, and would have as soon placed a serpent in the hand of my Caroline as one of those missives. Sir Edward often deputed me to open the letter bag; and how often have I been the unwilling instrument of her receiving them!

But their number declined; and then I wished it otherwise. I could not bear to see the feverish expectation, more fear than hope—

expectation whose disappointment was such an agony—burn within the eyes of Caroline; I could not bear to mark her misery; and, alas! I could not make her happy.

Their number declined, then almost wholly ceased. Yes; within five months of that *one*, George Danvers had forgotten her, or remembered her but as one of the thousand that had pleased for a day and been in a day forgotten.

He had too much regard for “appearances” to drop totally a correspondence that had been so very brisk a one: so now and then a letter came, I believe as friendly in its tone as ever, as replete with offers of service—which were indeed but offers, for George, except where he could reap some benefit in return, was not remarkable for practical friendship.

Caroline, too proud to complain, grew pale

beneath the suspense, the dread, the painful conviction, that came—slowly came, but came at last—the conviction that she was deserted where she thought her hope so sure. But she, suffering deeply, took her own resolution—and kept it.

William Desborough had left Holmesley at the same time with George Danvers, and, therefore, though he had watched the intimacy between the two, he had not remarked all that I have been describing, all the long after-time; this, that caused me so much anxiety, he was spared.

Now the party are again in May Fair. William has returned to join his family for the summer—Caroline and Mary have just been presented—Julia is looking rather pale and thought-

ful—Fanny is as merry as ever—and young Murray is beginning to hover again about the fair and cruel attraction of the preceding season.

Certainly, the two beauties now “coming out” were very superior in point of attraction to the two beauties that “came out” last year. Julia and Fanny, though very pretty, yet seldom entered a room where they were not equalled, often surpassed, by many; but Caroline and Mary were both supremely lovely, *their* rivals were few indeed. I suppose I had better describe them both, as I have already done Julia and Fanny; and I will begin with Caroline.

Caroline was a little above the middle height, with the most perfect figure I ever beheld, the roundest and most taper limbs. She was not, in reality, perhaps, taller than

Fanny, but she appeared to be so ; so well was the small head set upon the little graceful neck, so proudly was the slender form borne ever at its full height.

Although completely English, in all things save in birthplace, yet I never looked at Caroline without being reminded of that place of birth. One might have fancied those supple limbs, those delicate wrists and ankles, those tiny feet, to take their properties from Hindoo parentage ; and perhaps the full dark eye, with its long sweeping lashes, favoured a little the same idle notion ; but so far the idea went, and no further,—all else was English. The profile, rivaling in purity the outline of the Grecian ; the soft complexion, not dazzlingly fair, yet so richly contrasted by, while blended with, the tints of rose upon the cheek ;

the broad magnificent brow, glorious with the light of an unsurpassed intellect; the crimson lips, the smile, the glance so replete with intelligence; and last, the nameless expression, which, after all I have described, was yet the chief charm of all.

With Caroline expression was the greatest, with Mary it was the least beauty. Mary was one of those tall splendid-looking beings who everywhere excite admiration—a perfect blonde, queenlike in mien, gait, air, and shape, with the most brilliant complexion I ever beheld, the loveliest blue eyes, the most profuse and brightest hair.

Made upon rather a large scale, her proportions were almost as symmetrical as those of Caroline, and in saying this I give them high praise. Her features were as regularly perfect.

But Mary, though more striking, perhaps, at first, was nothing to Caroline in the long run—Caroline, whose varying expression, changing tints, whose every smile, every sigh, every look, of sadness and of joy, was in itself a new shape of beauty.

During the winter months, while Caroline and the rest of the home party had been quiet at Holmesley, she had, as I have said, written continually. Just before we left Holmesley, where I had sojourned for most of the time, she confided to me that she had completed a work—a novel, in three volumes, of course; and she asked me to aid her in the course she must pursue as regarded its publication.

“But, Caroline,” I said, “I thought that Mr. Danvers had undertaken to assist you in every possible way?” I looked hard at her as I spoke.

She coloured slightly.

“ I have rather dropped my correspondence with him of late, and he is so much engaged ; I had rather not, if I could do without, apply to him.”

Poor Caroline! I pitied her. I saw her own rich blood shaming in those varying cheeks the poor evasion of her words—the yes, the *falsehood*.

“ Surely, dear Caroline, Mr. Danvers’s engagements will all be put aside when the question is his being able to serve *you* ; there can be no doubt of that. Had you not better apply to him ? we know he will be so ready to do all he can.”

I confess it was cruel in me to speak thus, but I felt a little bitterness at the time. I was sorry as soon as I had spoken. She turned her

eyes on mine, with an anxious distressed sort of look.

“Did you not tell me, cousin John, that you would always be my friend?” and she laid her hand upon my arm.

Caroline knew her power over “cousin John.” I stooped my lips to her hand.—

“My dearest Caroline, in everything, in anything, only command me.”

So it was agreed that I should forward her MS. to the publisher Fumbel, whom I knew well, indeed, who happened to be under obligations to me; and accordingly so I did, and received in reply a very civil note acknowledging the receipt of the papers, and promising that judgment should be pronounced upon them as soon as possible.

Caroline showed little of the anxiety, the

feverish anxiety, which torments most young authors. She was so confident in the acceptance and subsequent success of her work, that she immediately commenced another in a similar style, in order that she might be prepared to follow up the blow. I read much of her MS.; the rest she read to me. It was certainly very clever, but I had expected something even better from Caroline—something deeper, more full of soul, of the rich poetry of soul; I thought she would have gone more beneath the surface.

“Caroline, this is excellent; but I thought you could do even better.”

“And so I can; but this will answer my purpose. I write not for fame, save such as will ensure me a ready sale for all I may attempt in future. You see how matter-of-fact I

am; but it is so indeed. This book will make a sensation; it will just suit the public taste. I have looked around for a gap at which to enter, and I fancy I have just hit upon the right path. *Once*, cousin John, I cared for fame, and I would rather have written the smallest volume, and felt that it was worthy of me, than have poured out hundreds of inferior books and have received thousands for each of them. But now my views are changed; I write only for emolument. There was no occasion to strain my powers or waste my time; a little very slight trouble has produced that book, and you will see it will answer."

"Well, Caroline, I dare say you are right; but here you are, 'coming out;' and I have an idea that, before your first season is over, you

will have other things to think about than writing novels."

She fixed her eyes steadfastly upon mine, and she became white as marble as she answered,—

"I shall not marry, cousin John."

"Did I say anything about marrying, Carry?"

"No, but I knew what you alluded to."

"And, Caroline, *you* to say you will never marry—*you* at nineteen!"

She was evidently not willing to pursue the discussion. She smiled, and said only,—

"Well, there is time enough; we shall see."

As Caroline expected, her book was taken by the publisher, who, screw as he was, tried hard to get it for nothing; but I was determined it should not be so. I battled for Carry, who knew nothing of this part of the affair until it

was over ; and, resisting all the attempts to persuade me into an acquiescence in the half-profit system (which is no profit at all to the author), I contrived to obtain for her a sum of money, certainly not a very large one, but still very fair for an untried writer to receive. I brought Caroline the labourer's hire.

“ Here, Carry ; this will buy you such a pretty suit of pearls.”

She took it from my hand, smiling faintly. She turned to her little desk, and, placing it apart, locked it safely in a secret drawer.

“ I thank you, cousin John. *This* is the commencement of my independence.”

CHAPTER VII.

A FEW days after Mary's presentation the eccentric Lady Norton arrived unexpectedly in May Fair. Lady Desborough, who really liked her brother's widow, welcomed her with delight.

She remained but three days in town, during which time the drawing-room was never free from visitors to Lady Norton, who preferred receiving them there to admitting them to her more private apartments. She never altered her manner; she was the same to all—careless,

listless, by nature a perfect lady and a model of elegance; whatever she did seemed "well done."

Sometimes I fancied people must have thought her very odd; she was so indifferent to, so almost thankless for, the many inquiries, invitations, civilities, marks of attention and respect showered upon her from all sides. She would recline all day in a huge *fauteuil*, answering in low tones, speaking very little, chiefly in monosyllables.

There was a mixture of weariness—mental weariness—of impatience, of suffering; of fretfulness, the result of all these, apparent in her demeanour; but these, which might have made her ladyship a disagreeable woman, were ballanced by a thousand charms of person, and a thousand graces, not the least of which, per-

haps, was a certain helplessness—an indolence, almost endearing in its effect.

I have described Mary Norton, and in so doing I have described her mother; but the latter was, and had been always, the more beautiful of the two.

I think I see her now as she stood beside her child one evening at Almack's—the most distinguished figure certainly in the room. She was dressed in black velvet; her own profuse and fair hair was the only covering of her head; her tall splendid form, her snowy skin, showed to such advantage in this costume. Her diamonds were magnificent; they crowned her brow with a diadem of light, flashed upon her breast, and marked, by their starry circling, the perfect outlines of her neck and arm.

There she stood, speaking, moving, smiling,

so faintly and so infrequently, and with that air of listless elegance—quite a queen in appearance.

She remained with us three days, during which time her father, the Bishop of Stanwell, came to town. They did not often meet, the father and daughter; and she always seemed more melancholy than ordinary during and after an interview with his grace. As for him, he was just the same under all circumstances,—self-possessed, composed, cheerful; nothing seemed to affect his equanimity; for *him* at least there appeared to be no painful remembrances. The recollections that made his daughter's life a desert passed, like morning mists before the sun, from the unclouded prosperity of his.

Lady Norton left us as abruptly as she had arrived, without returning one of the many visits that had been made to her.

“ I told the people,” she said—“ I told them I had only come for a day or two, and should have no time for visiting. I am very glad to see all my friends, but they could not expect me to spend my day in driving about town from house to house. I came to see Mary, my child, and, now that I have seen her, I am going *home* again.”

And she pronounced the word “home” as though home to her was heaven; yet we all knew how desolate, how very desolate, was that lonely house.

The bishop bestowed particular attention upon his grandchild; he was proud of her.

“ How like you are to your mother—so like *Maria* !”

And Mary would be as proud of this compliment, for a compliment it was indeed.

She spent some days with her grandfather, who also came frequently to "our house." He evidently was very fond of Lady Norton, and the affection had descended upon the young child of this favourite daughter.

The bishop did not remain long in town; his sojourn was very short; at his age he required repose, and he found himself unequal to the fatigues of a London season.

He returned to Stanwell; and, ere Lady Desborough had removed her establishment from town, we were all one day surprised by a summons from the bishop to his granddaughter to attend him, a summons which was accompanied by a request, or rather a command, from Lady Norton, rendering it imperative on Mary to obey it without delay.

In the neighbourhood of Stanwell lived an

old lady named Marston, the mother of a very wealthy gentleman of the same name. This old lady was perhaps the most bustling, fidgety, intriguing, plotting old lady in the world. She and his Grace of Stanwell were sworn friends, and had been so all their lives. The bishop had derived many advantages for his family from his acquaintance with her, and these benefits had been repaid in kind.

Both were people fond of advancement, fond of accumulating wealth, fond of acquiring popularity; both were of the same way of thinking in political matters; both had great influence in their own county; and it was said at Stanwell that any member these two supported was sure to be returned. And not only in the case of "M.P.s" did the influence exist, but there was not an election for a parish beadle

in the town of Stanwell with which Mrs. Marston did not in some way interfere; nor was there a farm let, or a gamekeeper or bailiff engaged, upon the wide estates of Marston, without the bishop being first consulted on the matter.

Very soon after the bishop's return to Stanwell this lady had paid him a visit.

She was a little woman, with no remains of beauty, but much elegance of manner, and a fine intellectual expression in her dark and undimmed eyes. Her movements were quick, replete with energy, and full of the confidence of high fashion; they formed a striking contrast to the calm, almost lifeless, repose which characterised those of her companion.

Not often did these two ancient friends, the relics of a former day, meet to converse upon

the past, or speculate upon the future; but when they did meet, it was always to some purpose, and a great deal of business was done in each of their long interviews. The bishop rarely left the walls of his palace, save to attend divine service, or to pay an occasional formal round of visits. Mrs. Marston was as close a dweller within the splendid domains of her wealthy son, seldom issuing forth, save when her head was full of some scheme of aggrandisement or advancement, and then her route lay always towards the palace.

Now her scheme was a very important one, for it related to one of my little girls—to our pretty Mary.

“My lord,” she said, “I am anxious that my son should marry, and I cannot wish a more

suitable alliance for him than one with your family."

"You do me honour, dear Mrs. Marston," replied the sweet voice of the bishop. "Believe me, I feel flattered by your wish; but to which of my relatives are your views directed? And are you aware, Mrs. Marston, that with none of my grandchildren can you expect much ready money."

"Of that I am aware, my lord; but my son does not require any addition to his property, certainly not any present addition; but I would gain for him, my lord, that gift you all possess in such a wonderful degree, the gift of popularity. My son is not a man to make himself popular; he has none of those brilliant and graceful qualities essential to the character; he is timid, proud, retiring; he will never be what I would

have him, a leader of men, save, perchance, by means of a connexion which shall surround him with more attractive influences than those of mere wealth and large possessions. His character is gloomy, almost misanthropical. I have hitherto stood by him, to charm and to win, by flatteries and attentions, those whom gold will not dazzle, nor station awe; but when I am gone, I feel he will shrink back into himself. He has not talent or energy sufficient to rise to be one of the few; he has too much of the shyness of pride to stoop to conciliate the many who might lift him into distinction; he will sink into indolence and obscurity. Therefore, my lord, I would ally him with one of you, with one of *your* race; you have such power to charm men's hearts. I would ensure in his wife, and for his children, all that I so admire in you."

"Dear Mrs. Marston, I admire your candour, and I heartily approve the project; but to which of my granddaughters do your wishes particularly point?"

"To Mary Norton."

"Mary Norton!—my daughter's child! Why fix on *her*? I should have judged that either of the daughters of my son the Dean, any of the large family of my son the General, would have better suited Edward Marston."

"No, my lord; they are all too well accustomed to admiration, too spoiled by adulation; they would never receive the cold addresses of one whose hand and name are all I have to offer."

"His heart?" demanded the bishop.

"Will, I trust, soon follow; but he is not formed to woo a capricious beauty. Those

young ladies have had lovers, admirers; they will never be content with the formal observance of such courtship as my son will give."

"Mary Norton is very beautiful; she is already in the gay world; may *she* not be also aware of the delights of receiving admiration? will she not be as averse to cold and formal addresses?"

"I think not; she is young and gentle, and facile in disposition. I have made diligent inquiries respecting her. I have never heard that she has shown signs of preference for any one. She will be dazzled with the splendour of the match; she will be gratified by so advantageous a connexion presented to her so early in her life; depend upon it, *she* will offer no opposition."

“I will write to-night to Maria and to Lady Desborough. I will send for Mary. I will do all I can. But one thing I will say—I will not force her inclinations; if she loves another, it shall be sufficient; she shall not be a victim.”

“You have not always, my lord, been so scrupulous.”

“I fear I have sometimes dealt less gently than I should have done with the weakness of human affection. Her mother—my daughter Maria—you remember her wedding, Mrs. Marston?”

“I do—I do.”

“Yes, yes, you do; and it was a melancholy scene. Ah, Mrs. Marston! I trampled, I fear, too rudely on that young heart; I fear I caused much misery. Her husband!—his was a sad death; and she——”

"Well, well, my lord; those circumstances were mournful; but it was, I trust, not an unhappy marriage, and at least it was a brilliant one."

"Ah! but her temper was once so sweet and gentle. You have heard how strange it is become; and when I watch the appearance of those early grey hairs, I feel something like remorse."

"Grey hairs may be caused by many circumstances. I do not believe much in such great power given to grief. She is still a splendid beauty."

"Mrs. Marston, I know she is not happy. I will do what I can; but I will not give her daughter to such a fate as hers."

"Be it so, my lord. I abide by your word. You will do all you can."


The bishop did write to Lady Desborough, as also to Lady Norton, who immediately wrote to Mary, desiring her to accept the invitation ; but she also addressed a letter to the bishop. And, long years after, that letter was shown to me. Thus it ran :—

“ My Father,

“ I have received your letter. I have read, and I understand it. You ask another victim—oh, my father ! thou demandest another victim. I send thee my daughter, for I have been accustomed to obey. I send thee my Mary, my child, my only one. Have mercy upon her ! save her !—save her from the life to which thou hast condemned me.

“ Must I tell thee, now at this distant time, of all that day’s suffering ? Dost thou remem-

ber how one hour of unutterable agony changed the soft nature thou didst deem too pliant to feel pain, into one which thou hast seen pass through many after-years, hardened to the shape that anguish stamped upon it, taking no new impression? Must I tell thee what I once was—a flower, a glory, a sunbeam round thy path? Must I tell thee what I have been since? what I am *now*? Oh! though, from the hopelessness of my own woe, this child has had no power to charm me, yet I could not see her suffer without feeling my own pangs renewed. Save her—save her! To my living tomb, to the grave which has long closed over my happiness, I would not have my child descend. For my own fate I reproach thee not; I believe thou canst not err; I would not blame thee; I would but implore. Alas! thou knowest not all I have endured!



“ Think of me once—so gay, so fair, so happy ! Think, too, of him—his fate ! Think of my sin, my broken faith, my blind obedience. Ah, fruitless sin !—vainly blind obedience ! Thou lovedst me once, I believe thou lovest me still. Think that, in the daughter I send to thy bidding, thou again beholdest thy young Maria, thy favourite. Transfer to her all thy affection ; sacrifice her not to thy worldly policy ; destroy her not both body and soul. Destroy not—oh, my father !—both mother and child !

“ MARIA NORTON.”

’Tis said the bishop, after having read this letter, sat musing some time in silence. Somewhat of sadness might be traced on his calm, peaceful countenance. But the unwonted expression did not linger long.

“Poor Maria! I fear you have suffered deeply. Fear not; Mary shall have justice done her. I did not think you would have felt so keenly. Yet, as Mrs. Marston said, it has been a ‘splendid match!’ many advantages have accrued from it. But for this connexion Archibald would never have carried the day at Gloucester. And then those two commissions in the Guards; that place also for James. Yes, it has been an alliance of great utility. Maria should think of these things.”

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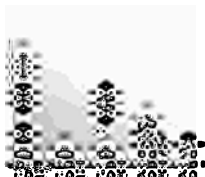
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THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY.

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THE
DESBOROUGH FAMILY.

BY
MRS. PONSONBY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. MARSTON knew her influence over her son, at least she appeared to be well assured of its strength in this instance, for she did not consider it necessary to inform him of the match she had in view for him, until the young lady she had selected was actually arrived at Stanwell. Then I fancy some stormy interviews must have taken place, for Edward Marston was as obstinate as his mother was imperious, and often attempted to assert the prerogative

of free will, though, poor fellow, the attempts were in vain.

Edward Marston was one of those proud, shy, awkward, retiring sort of men, that require so much management, and meet with so few who can understand or appreciate them. He had many good qualities, many bad ones. His character was so evenly balanced, that it required but a good or bad influence to weigh it down on the corresponding side; the influence of a stronger or finer nature than his own raised it to nobility, while that of a weaker one would sink it into debasement; hitherto it had been supported by the active spirit of his mother. He was of that disposition which feels relief in the society of inferiors. Edward Marston was amiable, affable, agreeable enough among those with whom he was very intimate,

as also with his tenants, bailiffs, and such gentry, but with men of the world, men of talent, he was not at home.

His mother managed him pretty well; she had been tolerably fortunate in her selection of acquaintances and intimates for him; she was very anxious to see him well married. He allowed her to scheme, and plot, and intrigue at any rate she liked, provided he was left at liberty to ride round his park or across his estates as often as he pleased, and to bury himself amid the books in his splendid library: on these terms he was content.

Edward Marston was in town the early part of this season, but London was not to his taste; he always broke away as quickly as he could, spite of all the efforts made to detain him by eager mammas and papas, and spite of

all the attempts of many a sharp-witted fashionable *roué*, who would gladly have had the rich Marston set down in his bill of fare as *pigeon*.

What Marston did with himself in town was always a mystery to me ; he never became an *habitué* at the clubs ; no one ever saw him where one sees every one else ; occasionally one caught a glimpse of his sharp melancholy face in the pit of the Opera, but always looking as though he were chief mourner at a funeral ; he generally dined once or twice at " our house," but I cannot say I ever heard him open his lips ; now and then one met him at a ball, but he seldom danced.

In person he possessed all the ingredients of good looks, but the same want was apparent in his exterior as existed in his interior man, the want of natural dignity.

He was above the middle height, but he looked short. Although with regular features, dark piercing eyes, and an expression full of intelligence, his face was not an agreeable one. One almost said, while speaking of Edward Marston, "What a mean-looking fellow!"

Mrs. Marston, while announcing her intentions to him, plunged at once *in medias res*, into the heart of the subject she intended to discuss. She held a letter in her hand, and she began—

"My dear Edward, here is something that will interest you deeply; a letter from the Bishop of Stanwell."

"Well, dear mother?" he answered, in an inquiring sort of tone.

"Well, Edward," she repeated; "how indif-

ferent you seem to be. It announces the arrival of Mary Norton at Stanwell."

"Ah! I remember her, I think, at Lady Desborough's; a fine girl. But really this intelligence is nothing to me; I shall probably not see her."

"My dear son; on your account only is she brought here."

"On *my* account!" and he rose from his seat in surprise.

"Yes, on your account. The bishop has consented to my wish to connect our families. I have demanded his interest in your favour for the hand of Mary Norton."

"My favour!—Mary Norton! My dear mother, what have you done?"

"Done, Edward! why, much towards securing

for you one of the best connexions in England; certainly the best for you."

"Oh, mother! how foolishly you have acted. I shall not think of marrying Miss Norton."

"Edward, do not vex me; why should you oppose my wishes? I wish you to make this alliance. Tell me, my son, have I not hitherto striven only for your good and your happiness? I have weighed well the advantages and disadvantages of this match, and the former strongly preponderate; the connexion is the best you can enter into; the lady is the very person calculated to make your home a home of comfort. You will live to thank me for this suggestion."

"You are wrong, mother; I could not be happy with that girl. I will not marry her."

"Edward, do not speak so hastily; you *will*

marry her. I know your disposition, your character, so well. I am quite aware of your faults, as I am proud of your good qualities; and I know well by what means to meet those faults, to enhance those good qualities. I can judge best what disposition will best assimilate with yours. Leave me the choice of the partner of your life—the life I must soon cease to share with you.”

The old lady knew these words would have an effect upon her son; he was much attached to his mother; he could not bear to hear her death mentioned.

Subdued for the moment, he bowed his face upon his hands.

“I wish to make you all things, my child—happy, respected, popular. This girl is so lovely, so gentle, so facile; you must be happy

with her. Your fortune and station always command respect; and this connexion with the most captivating race of people in the world will make you popular; all that is wanting in yourself will be supplied by your wife and her relations. Why should you not be all that *I* would have been had I been a man? I would have been the first among subjects, or I would have died in striving to be so."

The old lady was quite in a state of excitement. She was, truly, what she represented herself to be—intriguing, ambitious, aspiring. Not so her son. A calm smile, in which might be detected a slight mixture of contempt, passed across his face as she spoke; it was succeeded by an expression of the profoundest melancholy.

"Mother, I fear I never can be what you

hope; by the means you mention I never will."

"Edward, Edward, say not so! think again. Does not the picture I have drawn content you?"

"Mother, Lady Anne Grantley is all that you have styled Miss Norton—all, and more."

Mrs. Marston appeared agitated. She rose and paced the room; she uttered a cry of anger; she returned to her seat; she gazed fixedly at her son, and added—

"I would almost rather see you in your grave than wedded to that woman."

A dark flush crossed his brow.—"I thank you, madam!"

"I cannot bear that Lady Anne," she continued; "she is so haughty, so unbending, so unconciliating. She shows so much contempt

for all that I most value ; she is little fitted to be your wife."

" But I love her, madam."

" Nonsense, Edward !" said Mrs. Marston.

Edward held his tongue, but looked so vexed that his mother rejoined,—

" I mean, my dear son, that I cannot believe it possible you should love Lady Anne Grantley."

" If she will accept me, mother, I shall marry no one but her."

" Oh, no, Edward—no ! Pray do not let me hear you say so ; it would break my heart."

" My dear mother, I would not give you pain for the whole universe ; but allow me to consult my own wishes in this, the most important event of my life."

Mrs. Marston sat and tapped the floor with her foot; she always did so when she was in a passion.

“Suffer me to reason with you,” rejoined her son. “Believe me, you err in your notion of the character best fitted to mate with mine. You describe Miss Norton as facile and gentle. Such ought not to be the character of the woman who should be my wife. Miss Norton is too young—she is but nineteen, I am thirty; the difference is too great. Lady Anne is by some years her senior. Miss Norton’s gentleness and facility will not endear her to me; I wish to wed some one who can cheer and elevate my spirits by the brightness and power of her own. Such a one is Lady Anne; and, moreover, she is as gentle, as sweet tempered, as Miss Norton. And then, how infinitely

more lovely—how highly gifted—how splendidly endowed—what grace—what beauty—what talent! Remember, mother, that I need not marry for wealth; I need not seek connexion. Remember what I am. I am not formed to rise in the world; I can neither fight nor fawn. I seek but happiness, peace. Would you, my mother, deny me hopes so reasonable? Would you condemn your only child to a life of slavery, repentance, discontent? Think before you urge me further. How miserable is an ill-assorted marriage! Why doom me to one? Either leave me to pursue the choice of my heart, or to live alone. I care nothing for all you prize so much. How vain are worldly triumphs, how little is human grandeur, when compared with the proud sacrifices made by loving hearts, the ceaseless triumphs of tried and united affec-

tion over the ills and the cares of existence, over the evils of our nature ! Then again—in point of connexion—where could I look higher than to the daughter of the Duke of Nollerton,—an only daughter too, with wealth equal to rank ? What possible objection, mother, can you have to such an alliance ?”

Mrs. Marston answered, with impatience, “ I cannot bear that woman ; I have told you so once ; and I dislike the duke and duchess particularly : they are opposed to me in everything—politics, ideas, everything.”

“ But surely, my mother, you would not let this sort of objection interfere between me and my happiness ? Mother, I implore you, let me rest ; let me lead a life of calm felicity with the woman I love, or lead it alone. One way I should be happy, the other I should be content.

I have no ambition beyond these walls ; no interests dearer to me than those of my tenants and dependents, no companions so welcome as these books ; leave me with these. May I not be happy ? Can I not, with all my riches, purchase happiness ?”

Mrs. Marston listened with no appearance of conviction. She was not a person whom words could move, not even the eloquence of nature.

She rose as she said, “ Edward, I have told you my wishes ; I little thought I should ever have lived to find you so opposed to them. If you refuse to pay your addresses to Miss Norton, you place me in a most awkward position, for I have pledged you to do so. The bishop expects you at Stanwell to-morrow. At least, my son, you will not refuse to see Miss Norton ?”

She took his hand, and he, softened by her altered manner, replied,—

“Of course, dear mother, I cannot object to that.”

So closed this interview.

In the progress of this veritable history I have noted down the scenes, events, and conversations as they occurred, though with many, and indeed with most, I did not become acquainted until long after.

Long after, when all was over—the excitement, the uncertainty, the hope, the fear—when some of the characters I here introduce were gone, when all had passed the bright bounds of youth, when from some life and life’s illusions were fleeting fast away, when, to all, life had been a lesson, I learned from lips whose rose

hues were sadly faded the story of each past existence. Here I attempt to record simply the events of the lives of my four dear little girls, and I wish I could feel sure that any of my readers will take the same interest in their perusal as I do in thus recording them.

The Duke of Nollerton had a place in the neighbourhood of Stanwell, where he spent great part of his time; he and Mr. Marston were on good terms as neighbours, though, as Mrs. Marston said, they "differed in politics."

Lady Anne was, perhaps, aware of the admiration Mr. Marston entertained for her, but she was careless of it, as she was of all admiration. I do not think she ever liked any man save William Desborough, but I think she fully appreciated the good points in Marston's character, and pitied him for its deficiencies. I do

not think she felt the same contempt for him that she did for the most commonplace people.

The bishop gave a grand ball soon after the arrival of Mary at the palace, to which every one was invited.

Fortunately for the furtherance of the schemes of Mrs. Marston, Lady Anne was prevented by some slight indisposition from attending this ball: Mary had therefore no rival in beauty.

She had been kept purposely out of the way of Mr. Marston, and of all the rest of the world of Stanwell, until this evening. Now, arrayed in everything that could enhance her almost divine loveliness, she appeared among a crowd of admirers.

Lady Norton, agreeably to the request of her father, was at Stanwell at this time; and, oh! with what an anxious eye did she watch the

intrigues and the plotting around her, and the unconscious gaiety of their object !

She herself, so conspicuous from her beauty, her grace, her listless elegance, her profound melancholy, her eccentric conduct, created an interest only second in vividness to that occasioned by the *début* of her daughter. She was still so charming, she had been seen so seldom, her fate was so wrapped in mystery.

Once in these same halls she had been the very light and glory of their brilliant society. Many of those gathered to this meeting remembered her thus ; those who remembered what she had been could not but sigh and wonder while looking upon what she was—changed, changed, indeed !—that light, that glory gone for ever. She moved amid the scenes of past happiness, a wan, sad ghost,

haunting the place of a former and bright existence.

Marston seldom danced ; but on the evening in question, to please his mother, he consented to do so ; she entreated him to solicit the hand of Mary.

Mary accepted him, and they stood up for a quadrille ; but the dance was changed at the request of some one about to leave the assembly, who particularly wished for a country dance before quitting it.

Of course, each person retained his previous partner, and Edward Marston and Mary found themselves nearly at the top of a long country dance.

Henry Wentworth, who had come down to Stanwell on the bishop's invitation, happened to stand just below them ; his partner was a

very nice girl, a Miss Acton, to whom I always fancied he was attached.

Henry was in his usual good spirits; he took Marston by the arm, and said, "Do you know, Marston, they say that the lady one finds oneself engaged to for the first country dance on such an occasion as this is supposed to be destined by fate for the fair partner of one's life? You have heard that, have you not, Marston?"

Edward tried to laugh; he turned his eyes full upon the splendid face and figure of Mary Norton: while gazing half unconsciously upon these, he heard the light voice of Wentworth rejoin—

"Do you believe in fate, Marston?"

The speaker laughed as he spoke; but Edward, turning quickly upon him, replied—

"Only to conquer and defy it."

But though speaking so proudly, his face was pale with the strength of his foreboding, while Henry, as he stared at him, thought thus:—

“ Well, what an odd fellow Marston is! I always fancied he was a little cracked, and I am sure of it now.”

Edward Marston, in spite of the so much of good and brilliant in his character, was yet but a weak man.

Constant dropping, they say, wears away a stone; constant worrying, especially from a woman, will wear down at last the strongest opposition; so it was with Marston and his mother, in all their little debates and disagreements—she always gained her ends.

In this instance also she did so.

Long and dire was the struggle, bitter the contest; the struggle between his love for

Lady Anne and the consciousness of the small chance he had with her; the contest between his subservience to his mother and the strength of his own feelings. He knew he did not love Mary; he knew he did love Lady Anne; but he also was well aware that the latter was not at all likely to listen to him; he dared not offer to her; and, weary of his mother's constant urgings, he at last turned his thoughts towards the alliance she desired, I verily believe to get rid of the subject.

Then, the absence of Lady Anne favoured Mrs. Marston's views; the presence of Mary did not militate against them: although he was a man little susceptible of impressions from female beauty, yet it was impossible not to admire her, it was impossible not to like her; he began to feel it was possible to love her.

She, utterly unconscious of all this, unconscious of the struggle and the contest, unconscious of the wishes and efforts of her grandfather and his active friend, aided these by her attractions in the most efficient manner that could be ; and, seeing her thus, lovely, young, gay, the sunshine of the place wherein she dwelt, surrounded by admirers, idolized by her mother and the bishop, sought after by men as wealthy, as eligible as himself, Edward Marston thought, at last, " She is worth the winning."

His mother continued her course of coaxing and persuading. The bishop, by his urbane and gentle manners, flattered him into the belief that he was an especial favourite, although those manners were to all equally urbane and gentle. Gradually, the very obstinate Edward

Marston gave in, and yielded to the "much asking" of his mother.

He proposed to Mary. Not by word of mouth, but by letter. I have seen the letter; it was cold and formal enough, though not intended to be so. The words—the *words* were there—the expressions of high esteem, of admiration. Nothing could be more handsome than the offer. Mary was perfectly satisfied. But there was something wanting, while there was much that would not have been missed. One felt, as one read the carefully-written letter, "the man who wrote this was not in love."

However, Mary was satisfied. She was not a girl with much heart, nor had she a very strong mind. Good, gentle, sweet-tempered generally, she did not possess any of those higher qualities which distinguished my Caro-

line, none of the keen perception of Fanny Random, none of the calm firmness of Julia Desborough.

Had I been allowed to choose a husband for Mary, Edward Marston would have been the last person I should have selected.

Mary, her head full of white satin and diamonds, took the letter to her mother, who went directly to the bishop and informed him of the proposal. The bishop affected to hesitate. He recounted the advantages of the alliance, then he spoke of the disadvantages. He pretended to weigh the *pros* and *cons*, as though he had not settled the whole business in his own mind long before ; but he concluded by advising Lady Norton to accept the proposal for her daughter.

Lady Norton, her large melancholy eyes

fixed sadly on his face, listened with habitual deference to her father—listening, while her heart told her all the time what the conclusion would be.

Lady Norton had little esteem for the Marstons, nor much reliance upon the chance of happiness offered to her daughter from the character of the man who demanded her as his wife, but she had not courage to say so. She never had attempted to question the perfect propriety and wisdom of her father's decrees, not even when her own happiness was at stake ; she dared not do so now.

Edward Marston, accepted by Mary Norton, entered with a good grace upon his new vocation of suitor. He was really struck with the many captivations of his betrothed. His fancy was certainly taken.

As for his affections, Lady Norton only, rendered acute in affairs of the heart by the imperishable anguish of her own, saw the hollowness of the feelings on both sides, and, watching the absence on the part of both of that earnest, honest passion, whose strength she had known but as the source of all desolation, yet trembled for the future while she thought of that absence.

It was agreed that the marriage should take place from Stanwell, according to the great wish of the bishop. It was fixed for the end of July, until which time Mary was to remain with her grandfather.

The intervening weeks were spent in all the bustle preparatory to great weddings, signing, sealing, and settling. Mary was so pleased with her occupations of choosing dresses and

ornaments, she was so flattered and petted by all, she lived in a vortex of delightful excitement. Mrs. Marston was as delighted as possible; the bishop was gratified; my little girls were all charmed with the prospect of a wedding; Lady Desborough fully approved of this "brilliant match;" William saw no reason to disapprove; I saw none myself; and the bridegroom elect, for a time, believed himself, spite of all his past feelings, to be perfectly happy.

CHAPTER II.

BUT while events were thus progressing at Stanwell, do not think we were idle at May Fair ; far from it, we were as busy as possible.

Caroline, taken from the quiet of Holmesley, where all her happiness and all her sorrows had first dawned or descended upon her, had recovered, I was glad to perceive, something of her former cheerfulness ; the whirl of life around could not fail to interest her. She turned from her own sad inward contemplations, to the new shapes of action or of charac-

ter which each day presented to her view. At Holmesley, the remembrance of her unfortunate attachment was ever with her. She could not open the page of a favourite author, she could not sit for one hour in that dim old library, she could not raise her eyes to one of the pictures on the walls, without vivid and painful recollections of the man who, while teaching her new reason for, and new modes of admiration of all these objects, invested them with an interest till then unfelt, an interest at first full of delight, *now* become most painful.

Dear old Holmesley! how Caroline loved you! how we all loved you! But, from the date of that visit, Holmesley to Caroline was not a home of happiness, and how could it be so to me?

There is a walk at Holmesley—a winding,

tree-sheltered walk. We, taking the name from the country people about, call it the "Lovers' Walk."

When first George Danvers left us after that disastrous visit, when I felt a little bitterness of heart (had I been in love with Caroline I should have called the feeling jealousy), I would sometimes make my Carry blush by teasing her with questions and remarks about the "Lovers' Walk," and inquiries as to how far she missed her late companion there; but I did not continue this long. After their correspondence slackened, after the first symptoms of neglect appeared, when the shaft had been sped, I felt it would have been cruel to have persisted in this idle pleasantry.

My window commanded a view of this path; I could see some way down it; I could also

trace, occasionally, its more distant windings among the trees. How often have I sat for hours, while George Danvers and Caroline paced slowly to and fro upon this walk ! He would at times have a book in his hand, and would occasionally read thence a few lines, then turn his face to hers while speaking of what he had perused ; but more frequently they had no companion of this nature, only to each other were they all in all.

I have watched them often ; it was certainly no great pleasure to me to do so, but I could not tear myself away. Their conversation would be so earnest ; and her face—so beautiful, so full of intelligence—how I loved to gaze upon its varying expression—its silence, even more eloquent than its speech ! And how I hated him, with his gentle, insinuating manner,

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of deceit, learned during a long course of practice.

With George Danvers this was eminently the case, and Caroline was deceived. But I have said I believed George Danvers really loved her better than he had ever loved any one: there was some sincerity, perhaps, in his attentions.

He went. And then, watching from my window, I saw Caroline every day retrace, alone, the way she had so often trod with him. Day after day she went; and she was happy.

But the change came, and with it I saw the light vanishing from her brow and eyes. I saw, as she paced along that lonely walk, how the eyes sought the ground, how the step became slow and heavy.

But, until we left Holmesley, she was constant to her choice, continuing daily her walk; even when each flower, each tree she passed, must have been an awakener of regret and mortification.

I often wondered why she should thus appear to tempt the revival of painful recollections. She has told me since, that she imposed this task upon herself as a sort of penance for the crime of which she had been guilty—the crime of weakly trusting.

Caroline was of a most earnest and devoted temperament. Loving once, she loved for ever; loving one, she changed not. There was no fickleness with her, there was none of that subservience to circumstances manifested in so many characters. She could not—disappointed in one affection—seek for so-

lace in another. Wakened from one glorious vision, she could not turn again to sleep and dream another dream.

George Danvers thought constantly of Caroline for a time. When he left her, he bore away with him a strong impression of her beauty and her genius. He often thought, "Had Caroline been the heiress, how happy we should have been together!" But there it ended. He had no idea of devoting himself to her happiness—of working for her. No; he was too selfish even for that; he would not have run the risk of being forced to give up the smallest of his "comforts," as he used to call them, or of incurring the slightest possible addition to his self-prescribed maximum of literary labour, for all that was most fascinating in woman—no, not for Caroline herself.

When her bright idea was fresh upon his mind, he wrote, as I have said, continually. As the image became more faint, or while newer shapes, nearer and more present with him, for the moment usurped its pedestal, he would slacken in his correspondence. By degrees the number of these usurpations increased—the bright idea faded—the image was dethroned.

And then, as the violence of his love abated, so did the interest he had felt in her literary pursuits, so did his remembrance of the promises he had made to aid her in all her wishes and efforts.

One excuse he had—he believed not in the existence of love, as the absorbing, life-cheering, or life-destroying passion it is represented by poets and novelists. His experience among

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women, moreover, had been of that nature that he scarcely believed in such a thing as female virtue; he believed very few women to be pure in heart, even though circumstances and want of opportunity kept them so, or apparently so, in conduct.

Not that he was so blind to Caroline's real character as to couple her with the women to whom he had been hitherto accustomed, the heartless sharers in his heartless *liaisons*; but he believed she would soon become as one of those.

He had no idea of what love might be in such a mind as hers, with all its passion, its deep devotion, its enthusiasm, its power.

He knew not what her love was, all its trust, its confidence, its agony, its shame.

He knew not half the sorrow that he

wrought—it was scarcely within his nature to comprehend it; he knew not the extent of the mischief he had done.

But I have digressed a little. I ought to have been describing the progress of events in town. Caroline accompanied Lady Desborough and her party to town, but I was really shocked to see the disinclination she at first manifested to society. This soon wore off. She became amused, then interested; at last she began to enjoy herself, and to seek pleasure like the rest of the world.

George Danvers was away. He had been obliged to leave town in the very commencement of the season, on business that detained him in Paris for a month. During this month, my Carry, freed from the depressing influence of Holmesley recollections, became quite another girl.

My spirits and my hopes revived. "She will triumph," I thought, "over that romantic fancy." And so it might have been; but fortune was against us.

Caroline's work was in process of printing, and she employed her leisure hours in writing another. She also wrote verses, which she contributed to different periodicals. Her lines were admired; she made no great effort in this description of composition; but what she did she did well.

The publishers and editors flattered Carry, or rather they gave her just praise; and she was not too proud nor too wise to be pleased with this.

That most urbane of publishers, Fumbel, granted her several personal interviews during the progress of the negotiation for her novel,

and after its completion : he also admitted her as a contributor to a magazine of which he conducted the publication—a paid contributor. Caroline was delighted.

Fumbel had a genius for discovering talent. He soon perceived that Caroline would become a popular writer. Her name and connexions were also greatly in her favour in his eyes. As for her personal charms, her youth, her beauty, her fascinations—Fumbel cared for none of these ; he would have paid her equal attention had she been a Gorgon, provided he felt that he could make a little money by her.

Everybody knows what a dinner given by a publisher is like, the heterogeneous collection of “talent” there assembled, sometimes not ill-assorted, sometimes very much so.

Imagine my Caroline being invited to

one of these affairs, and imagine her accepting the invitation.

At first Lady Desborough was horrified at the idea, but, after a little coaxing from Caroline, she consented. Moreover, I was also invited. Fumbel was very fond of asking me.

Caroline said—"My dear aunt, I am now beginning my career as a great literary character. I am one of these people. I must, if you please, go to this dinner. I shall consider it as my first introduction to 'the set' to which I am in future to belong."

"And I will take care of Carry," I said.

Lady Desborough had great reliance upon Caroline's prudence. She never had occasion to say to Caroline, "My dear, you must be more circumspect."

But she had sometimes to give Fanny Random a slight lecture of this nature, for Fanny was so careless, so gay, so light-hearted, that her spirits sometimes ran away with her decorum, and her demeanour was more that of a child than of a young lady arrived at the staid age of twenty.

Lady Desborough would often remark—

“Really, Fanny, you must not be so wild. You are too old to be playing billiards all day with that boy, Tom Wilmot” (this was during a visit Tom paid to Holmesley at Christmas); “and to see you dance that country dance at Mr. Manly’s, one would think you never danced before, or never were to dance again.” And then in town the cry would be—“Fanny, what could you find to laugh at so while you were standing up in the quadrille with young

Murray? you are too familiar with him. If you do not take care, he will be proposing to you again, which you will find an unpleasant thing."

"Oh dear, no, aunt! I shall not care at all: indeed, Mr. Murray renewed his proposals last night, but I told him he had no chance."

"I am sorry, Fanny, to hear you speak with such levity of so serious a circumstance; if you never mean to marry Mr. Murray, you ought not certainly to encourage him as you do."

"My dear aunt, I hate quarrelling with people, and, having told him I never shall accept him as a husband, but will always value his friendship, surely no one can blame me if he persists in offering to me."

"That is not the ordinary way of doing things, Fanny."

“Then it must be a way of my own, dear aunt. Pray do not be angry; I assure you Mr. Murray quite understands me.

“It is more than I do, Fanny; you seem to like Mr. Murray.”

“Oh, yes; he is quite my style.”

“Then why not marry him? it would be a ‘splendid match.’ Mr. Murray is one of the richest commoners we have.”

“He is not my style for a husband, aunt; but I like him as a partner.”

“Well, Fanny, you are your own mistress; you can do as you please; but if you do not take care, you will have to accept or refuse Lord Newton. You encourage him to the greatest possible extent. In the park the other day you were listening to him with such attention, as though he were a Cicero in eloquence,

or a Sheridan in wit, instead of being, as he is, one of the greatest bores in London."

"Lord Newton! now you cannot surely think he would ever presume to fancy I would marry him. I, Fanny Random, marry Lord Newton! But he is a dear old thing, and I do like to hear him talk."

"Really, Fanny, you provoke me."

"Indeed, aunt, I had no idea I could be accused of flirting with such an ancient as dear old Newton."

"Lord Newton, if you please, Fanny."

"As dear old Lord Newton then. But to hear him prose does me so much good, and no one else will listen to him; I do it out of charity."

"I think you very thoughtless, Fanny."

"Indeed, dear aunt, I am not so; but if you

could hear how he tells a story!—Anecdote Hamilton is quite lively in comparison. Shall I tell you how it is, aunt?”

“As you please, Fanny,” returned Lady Desborough, with an air of offended dignity.

“Well, then, this is his way.” And Fanny continued, mimicking Lord Newton as she spoke—“‘My dear Miss Random, you must know that I have a little estate in Westmoreland, and a curious circumstance occurred connected with it the other day. I will tell it you, provided you wish to hear it. Old customs are always interesting to well-informed minds, and this is an old custom what I am going to describe, you know.

“‘It happens at Christmas they have a habit, the country people, of carrying off their neighbours’ property and concealing it, or leaving it

in the centre of the villages, or on the road-sides—a very reprehensible custom, Miss Random, I think you will agree with me.’

“I always assent,” continued Fanny, “and then he goes on.

“‘Well, this said little estate of mine is on the banks of Windermere—a very large lake, Miss Random, full of char—char, a fine fish, you will agree with me; excellent potted, breakfast or lunch. Well, on the banks of Windermere there is a great deal of wood, large extent of plantations, but not much game: no preserving in those parts; many poets though. You will always remark that, Miss Random—a great many poets about the lakes—always.

“‘But about this custom. Happening to look over my steward’s account, there I saw an item,

“ New iron gates for carriage-entrance to the cottage.” Now I was struck with that, for, when I was down there last summer, I particularly noticed the gates, which were new and very handsome; so I took the trouble to inquire. I do not often, Miss Random, look into those little things, but I have a sort of affection for my Lake cottage, and I particularly noticed those gates. Well, I write to my steward, and the answer I get is, “ They were carried away on Christmas-eve, and could not be found again.” Now, Miss Random, I ask you, is that a proper way of doing things? Is not such a custom, when viewed as taking place in a Christian country, most reprehensible? Look at the loss I incur; and though it is not much to me, yet one does not like to feel oneself done. And might not the loss have

fallen upon some one less able to afford it? do you suppose the barbarous inhabitants of the country cared for that? Perhaps you don't understand, Miss Random; let me put the case plainly to you, thus: A has a house with iron gates—gates that cost, doubtless, a considerable sum; B and C, both uneducated bumpkins, take the said gates off their hinges, carry them into the woods, or throw them into the lake, where they cannot be found. B and C are not discovered; it is known that the gates are taken, but by whom it cannot be exactly proved. A loses his gates, B and C enjoy their amusement, and escape scot free; all very well for them, but what becomes of A? I ask you, my dear Miss Random, where is A?

“‘Ah, indeed!’ I always reply, ‘where is A?’

“ ‘Then, Miss Random, let us put it in another light. Suppose the steward, whom we will call D, to be dishonest; what does he do? He charges to A the price of two iron gates, stated to have been taken away by the unruly villagers. A has no means, perhaps, of ascertaining the truth of the story; D, the steward, charges the price of the gates to A; A pays—defrauded, in fact—pays; D pockets the money. Again I ask, where is A? Surely, Miss Random, you will agree with me, this is a very reprehensible custom.’

“ ‘That is his style, dear aunt; is it not good?’

“ ‘How you run on, Fanny! I never heard your equal. You might employ yourself better than in mimicking so worthy a man as Lord Newton.’

"I only wanted to show you, dear aunt, that it was impossible I could think of him as a suitor, or imagine it likely that he should fancy I could do so."

"And pray how does this chattering prove that?"

"My dear aunt! now, how could I marry such an old proser? One day of his society would be sufficient for me; I should die, cousin John—I should certainly die."

These little conversations frequently took place between Fanny and her aunt. Lady Desborough could not bear the display of too much liveliness on the part of Fanny, or indeed on the part of any one. Fanny's natural spirits were, in her opinion, a little too high.

But with Caroline it was different. She

was staid and quiet beyond her years; she had never had much flow of "animal spirits," as they are called; since her attachment, even this little was become less. In general society she was silent and reserved, almost inanimate. With those she liked, with "kindred souls," she was all delightful animation; but, to see Caroline in a circle of commonplace people, you might have guessed her, judging from demeanour only, a matron of thirty.

As for the men to whom she was an object of admiration, and their name was Legion, she was perfectly inaccessible — coldness itself. How any young girl could have felt and maintained such insensibility to the pleasure of making conquests and exciting interest as she appeared to do, is matter of surprise to me. But it was so; and, although Caroline

received many proposals, and excited many ardent attachments, these all took place under circumstances of complete discouragement on her part. So distant was she, that these proposals were invariably made in writing. She never gave any man an opportunity of a personal declaration; even if he came with the intention, ready primed and charged, her unconsciousness or her frigidity took away from the poor lover his power of saying what he meant.

Lady Desborough had remarked this, but she did not guess the cause. I knew it.

I, although not admitted into Caroline's confidence, yet considered myself a sharer in it. I knew—poor thing!—I knew her feelings and her secret so well; but I did not consider myself authorised in betraying or

revealing this confidence and these secrets. No; I treasured my discoveries in my own heart, watching with tenfold interest over my darling Caroline, listening to Lady Desborough, aiding her with my advice, but not enlightening her as to the real motive of Carry's actions and conduct.

So, quite satisfied with the gravity of her demeanour and conversation, Lady Desborough withdrew her opposition to the independent part she wished to enter upon, and allowed her to accept the invitation to Fumbel's, to which party I offered to accompany her.

I never saw Caroline so excited with the anticipation of pleasure as I did the morning of this visit; she was as merry as Fanny Random. The idea of the new phase of society to which she was about to be introduced

filled her with delight. She had a quiet turn for the ludicrous, and she knew she should find great scope for the exercise of her risible faculties there.

She could guess that she would meet Lawrence, with his grim criticisms; Brunton, with his nervous deprecation of blame, his insatiable appetite for praise; Mrs. Duff, with her turban; Dillons, with his long hair. These were all sure to amuse her; and she promised to make Fanny laugh when she returned by a minute description of the conversation, dress, oddities, et cetera, of the parties she should meet.

Arrived at Fumbel's, I offered Carry my arm to lead her into the drawing-room. She smiled and looked so radiant as she took it—so radiant and so beautiful! Never had she

appeared so lovely. The dark eyes were so full of light, the cheek glowed with so rich a crimson, the infrequent smile was so very brilliant! And then her dress of the purest white—the most splendid materials—the very few ornaments so becomingly worn! Never had I seen any one so beautiful!—never, never shall I see again aught half so lovely and so dear!

We entered the room, where already the greatest part of the company was assembled. Carry seemed to bring light and glory into the apartment. The hostess advanced to receive her—as did Fumbel also.

Caroline had not quitted my arm while receiving and returning salutations; she still held it while answering some inquiries after her aunt put to her by Brunton. Her voice did

not alter or falter, nor did her cheek gain or lose one shade of rose; but I felt the arm that rested upon mine tremble violently, and she involuntarily pressed slightly towards me. I had been speaking to Fumbel, and listening to what was passing between Carry and Brunton, when I felt this movement. I looked hastily around. Within a yard of us, seated upon a sofa, his eyes fixed upon Caroline, I saw George Danvers.

I did not wonder that she trembled; I only marvelled at the calmness of her eyes, the unchanging colour of her cheek. As I led her to a seat we passed Danvers. She bowed to those around him, all of whom were persons of her acquaintance. She included him in the general salutation, greeting him with a smile as calm as was that she bestowed upon the rest. But he

sprang up and extended his hand to her; she took it with a frankness as cordial. None would have deemed, while remarking that meeting, that those two had so lately been all in all to each other—that in one heart the struggle between passion, the dictates of worldly wisdom, the long-contracted habits of selfishness, the burning of a renewed love, the force of a revived remembrance, pleasure, shame, surprise, regret, were awakening in all their greatest strength; that in the other, where nothing could be added to what had been already suffered—where the recollection, never sleeping, even this moment could scarcely render more intense—there dwelt an agony and a repentance which, but for that man, had never been.

Caroline seated herself; Danvers remained

standing and speaking to her. He inquired how long she had been in town, informed her of his own detention by business abroad, notified his intention of doing himself the pleasure of paying an early visit to Lady Desborough, regretted that his absence had prevented his doing so before. Caroline's answers were just such as were required, and were given in tones as careless as his own.

Careless observers, listening to those careless tones, would never have suspected anything like the truth. I only, knowing both so well—watching them, as I did, narrowly—could see in both how mighty was the effort necessary to produce that calmness, could estimate how strong was the emotion to conceal which required such an effort.

The first few commonplace compliments

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ventured, only impelled him more forcibly towards the object of his pursuit, only roused him to show me the extent of his power. However, I did all for the best.

The conversation during dinner was kept up very briskly by the host and by such of the lions as were in talkative moods. I could not say a word. George Danvers was unusually silent. But I confess I was surprised to hear the sweet voice of Caroline engaged in conversation with the almost equally sweet one of Brunton.

Caroline had great self-possession; this hour proved it. Her calmness was not that of indifference. No; it was that of a self-controlling pride.

Brunton paid her much attention. He was an intimate acquaintance of Lady Desborough's,

and Caroline had always been an especial favourite of his. He had remarked her early indications of talent; he had prophesied her arrival at distinction. His manner towards her was full of kindness; free from the common-places of conventional gallantry, it yet was remarkable for a display of respectful devotion. Perfectly understanding Caroline's views and wishes as to her literary career, he made it his pleasure to serve her in any unobtrusive way that he could. Many a favourable little critique upon the periodical containing her verses, and always especially noticing these, did I trace to the eloquent pen of Brunton; and when my Caroline had placed herself above the aid or the disparagement of criticism, none hailed her success with more delight than he did, not even I myself; for I could not but remember, through

all her career of triumph, that she was not happy.

That dinner was, I will engage, the longest George Danvers ever "assisted at," as the French say; certainly, I never saw him manifest greater alacrity than he did when he rose to open the door for the ladies as they took their departure; nor did I ever before know him so eager to follow them.

No sooner did he quit the dining-room than I also retired, and entered the saloon just in time to perceive George Danvers take his seat next Caroline.

She was placed upon a sofa somewhat apart, and until he joined her she had been alone. Now I could perceive her colour deepen as he addressed her. I could see that, beneath the passionate gaze he fixed upon her face, even

her eyes, proud as they were, grew dim with suppressed tears.

I could see, as I sat down in a line with them, and turned towards them, that she was actually trembling with emotion.

It happened that she carried in one hand a handkerchief bordered with lace; this hand rested on her knee: the frail bordering stood in light and bright relief between my eyes and the dark background of the crimson sofa. By the ceaseless motion of the fluttering lace I could judge how the hand shook that held it; I fancied I could count, by those tremulous movements, each hurried beating of her heart.

Why did it happen she was thus affected now, when at first she had maintained her composure so well? It seemed to me very strange, but perhaps his presence, his re-

newed attention, the unmistakable interest he showed by look and speech, had softened and subdued her. Long after, she repeated to me the conversation that passed between them.

George Danvers, seated beside her, turned his look steadfastly upon her face, but he did not speak; she kept her eyes fixed upon some object across the room—she dared not trust herself to meet that look. At last he broke the silence, in low, sweet tones.—

“Caroline, have you quite forgotten all the past?”

Forgotten! oh, what a cruel question! Poor Caroline—poor, poor Caroline!

She did not raise her eyes as she answered,—

“No, Mr. Danvers; I have not forgotten.”

“And how is it then that we thus meet, almost as strangers?” murmured George Danvers.

That was a stroke of policy on his part, thus to appear to insinuate that the blame of the cessation of correspondence lay with her. She felt indignant for a moment at the accusation thus implied.

“Can you ask that?” she said; and she spoke with quickness, regarding him as she did so.

“And can you think, Caroline, that, but by your own choice, this estrangement would ever have been?”

Caroline replied—“I know not to what you allude, Mr. Danvers. I never wished that we should be less friendly than we were; it was long before I could believe that it was your wish we should be so.”

“My wish, Caroline! Oh, never, never!”

“Then wherefore hath it been?”

“Nay, Caroline; your letters became less frequent.”

“And yours, Mr. Danvers?”

“Of course my correspondence was influenced by your own. I saw the failing in the spirit of yours. I was perhaps too proud. I felt that you had ceased, or were ceasing, to care for my acquaintance; this impression was strong upon my mind. I could not bear to write as I had written to one become indifferent or distasteful.”

“Ah, Mr. Danvers, how much you have been mistaken; how bitterly you have wronged me!”

Poor Caroline! truth itself, she could not even suspect the absence of truth in others; excuses that would not have deceived a lower nature were received by her implicitly. She could not have thus acted herself; she did not yet believe another could.

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"Sometimes, Caroline," he continued, "I was, I know, rather remiss in my correspondence; I was sometimes so much engaged. Even when you have been uppermost in my thoughts all day, when I have been longing to communicate with you, I have not been able to do so; it is not always possible to write. You know the bustle of a London life. Moreover, I thought that you, who knew me so well, would never suspect me of forgetting or neglecting you. I thought that, if any one would trust or believe me, that one would be yourself; but I have, indeed, been mistaken: I have found my confidence misplaced; you have deemed that I could forget you.

"Then, Caroline, your letters became less frequent; they were shorter, more constrained. I saw the change, yet suspected not the cause,

I knew not the fault lay in myself; had I but guessed the truth, how much of sorrow might I not have been spared!"

Sorrow!—the hypocrite!

"And, oh!" said Caroline, repeating his words, with a voice broken by emotion, "how much might I not have been spared!"

"But it is not too late, Caroline, to renew our friendship; and, this time, let no misunderstanding come between us. Shall I see you to-morrow if I call in May Fair? Will you be at the Opera on Tuesday? Shall I meet you at Lady Carlington's on Wednesday? When shall I see you again?"

Caroline answered not for some moments, then gave a hurried recital of the engagements of the week. She then relapsed into silence, only from time to time raising her eyes to his

as she listened to his sweet voice, each accent of which, as he continued his excuses and protestations, was winning her back to happiness. To her it was like a dream to see him once more, to hear him speak, to feel he was still her own, to find the past sorrow vanishing so quickly, to be happy again.

George Danvers found he had an easier task to perform than he had anticipated on his first undertaking it; he had not estimated highly enough the deep trust of her fine nature, the lingering strength of her love for him.

He had soon resolved what part to play. It would never have done for him to have allowed Caroline to remain in the belief that he had wilfully neglected her; had he allowed a coolness to arise between them, it would have precluded his visits to Lady Desborough;

he could not afford to lose the many agréments dependent upon that acquaintance.

Moreover, his love for Caroline returned in full force the moment he saw her again. The first impression upon him had been a strong one ; the second was doubly so.

At first she had charmed him by her beauty ; that beauty was increased and heightened, for the passion and the feelings that had passed through her mind since the period of their first meeting had added the graces of melancholy and of thought to the face that he had found so radiant with happiness. At first her youth and freshness had pleased him ; to these the fleeting months of their separation had brought a thousand new charms—the rich colour of the cheek was more varying, the dark eyes were as often sad as joyful, the broad brow was crowned

with an additional power of thought. And as she entered that evening among the assembled visitors of Fumbel, unexpected, unlooked for by him, he felt that, had he never seen her before, he must have loved her now—that, having loved her once, he loved her still.

That night, when, after learning from Caroline how far she had proceeded in her efforts to obtain celebrity as an authoress, and, in fact, all her plans and views, her hopes, her aspirations, her innocent ambitions, he proceeded alone towards his lonely home, he reflected seriously upon this renewal of his intimacy with her.

“Perhaps,” he soliloquised—“perhaps, if Caroline takes, she may be enabled to obtain by her writings an income of a few hundreds a-year, not more; few women make

more: living the life she does, she cannot have time to work hard. If I married her, she would lose the inducement to work at all, and her love would take place of her ambition; she would be too happy in her affection for me; she would cease to seek the excitement of a literary life; then she would expect me to offer a home to this father and mother of whom she speaks in such a romantic strain. Perfect ruin that would be. It couldn't be done. Then, suppose even that she should really rise to great distinction, and actually make a large income, say eight hundred or a thousand per annum—though, for the same reasons, I do not think that likely—even in that case, when I might possibly afford it, the same objection would exist; she would be too generous, she

would saddle me with those parents; I should have to work in my turn. No, it cannot be. I wish I could but marry her, for I love her as much as I ever love any one; and I know, poor thing, she loves me. If she had Fanny Random's money, I would offer to her before I am another day older; but, as it is, I will assist her as far as I can without risk or much trouble, and keep friends with her. Should she eventually marry well, she will be a——pleasant acquaintance." And as he said these last words, one of his peculiar smiles curled his handsome lip.

Such was the estimate in which he held my Caroline. Such was the nature of his love for her.

And she, Caroline, during the very birth of these desecrating thoughts, was supremely

happy in the assumed delight of her own : in her secret chamber, her face hidden, she wept warm tears of gratitude and joy ; she wept, nor chid herself for weakness, nor implored forgiveness for murmuring against her fate.

All with her was well. He had returned ; he was faithful ; he loved her—loved her truly. Of that she felt sure ; now they should both be happy—now nothing should again divide them.

Why had she ever doubted ? why had she ever mistrusted ? did she not remember his words—“ When we next meet, it will be, I trust, to part no more ” ? How foolish, how impatient, how wrong she had been ! how many circumstances might occur—had occurred ! why had she not thought of all these before ?

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Thanking Heaven for this return of happiness, Caroline murmured and wept and smiled herself to sleep, while George Danvers, amid his uneasy dreams, acknowledged, by the vivid recurrence of her image, how deeply, in spite of all his selfishness, she still was fixed within his heart; and I, John Greville, her affectionate cousin, never closed my eyes that night, so sadly did I think of her.

Let not the reader, however, look upon my Caroline as weak, or, as Tom Wilmot would say, *soft*, in being thus so easily satisfied with the excuses and protestations of George Danvers. The few sentences of their conversation that I have repeated were followed by many solemn asseverations on his part as to the truth of what those few advanced; these, again, by many earnest expressions of undi-

minished, nay, of increased regard. Caroline was not at first inclined to be readily convinced; but there was a busy pleader in her own heart, everything was on his side; that heart, his own eloquent persuading, her affection, which the unexpected sight of him woke up again in all its former strength, her natural confidence, her too great trust in the goodness of man, her ignorance of the selfishness, the vanity, the heartlessness of the class to which he belonged—of, in fact, George Danvers.

She loved him; that accounts for all. She loved him too well; and, blinded by this, the only passion of her life, she believed its object incapable of wronging wilfully the heart that poured at his feet so profuse a tribute of confiding affection.

But, Caroline, might not all that you had

suffered have taught you better? could you not rise superior to that romantic passion? could you not free yourself from such chains?

Alas! no; the mind, so strong in all else, in this was frail. That such a nature as yours should not have detected the vileness of his, is indeed to me a marvel. Fanny Random, with half your genius, half your talent, in this case showed more acuteness; she knew George Danvers only to despise; but you, Caroline, loved him. And he—how unworthy such a love!

CHAPTER III.

As George Danvers had prophesied it would be, Caroline, as she again became happy, lost much of her taste for literary pursuits. People who are perfectly happy, who have no cares or troubles, seldom do much in the writing line—I mean in the task-work of literary labour.

Caroline has since told me,—

“ When I was without sorrow I found I could not apply, my head was too full of pleasant thoughts; it was so delightful to sit and muse upon one’s happiness. I could not lower

my ideas to the drudgery of mechanical labour. I could do nothing but dwell upon the memory of the bright moments just passing—but anticipate the brighter ones to come. Life was a dream of joy. The realities of chapters, pages, proof-sheets, became irksome; while the necessity of attending to them interfered with those sweet visions. I needed not the petty excitement the occupations consequent upon my authorship afforded me. I needed not occupation at all. I required no refuge from sad thoughts, no solace, no employment. I was happy.”

So said Caroline, long after. George Danvers knew that it would be so. Gradually, as he renewed his visits to May Fair, and as their meetings elsewhere became more and more frequent, her application to her little

desk declined; even her periodical contributions were no longer sent regularly. The novel she was engaged in writing was totally neglected.

I said to her,—

“ Caroline, if you go on at this rate, you will never make your fortune.”

Caroline would smile and blush.

Then I would say,—

“ And how, Caroline, will you be able to buy the house you used once to talk of for your father and mother to come and live in? I thought you said you would never rest until you had earned the power of providing a home for them?”

Caroline would sigh.—

“ And I will not rest, cousin John, until I have done so. Do not think I forget them.

But just now, amid all this gaiety, my first season too, I have an excuse; have I not, cousin John?"

And, rather than vex my Caroline by appearing to blame her, I would reply,—

"I do not think you have forgotten them, dear; and you *have* an excuse."

I could not reproach her for being happy while she might. And her first season! Yes; that first season was a happy one. All was hers. Round her was concentrated a light from many sources. She was admired on so many accounts. She was so beautiful, so highly endowed, so brilliant! All was hers—birth, station, personal charms, mental distinctions, fascination of manner. In my eyes, in the eyes of many, Caroline was perfect.

Her father—still in India—took pride in this

beautiful child. From his brother and Lady Desborough he heard the most gratifying accounts of her accomplishments, talents, and loveliness; from herself he received letters that proved to him the fact of her superiority in mental capacities and attainments. He longed for the hour when he might return to England and this dear daughter. She was his only child. His wife was in declining health, and he feared would never live to see Caroline; but his hope for himself was strong.

Caroline, during her day-dreams, would say, "When I am married, mamma and papa shall come home and live with me. My husband will be so glad to welcome them, for my sake."

And once she said this to me, and I replied,—

“ And to whom will you be married so soon, Caroline ?”

And Caroline blushed as she answered,—

“ Oh, I do not know—I do not know what I am talking about: but I will have them home ere long; of that I am determined.”

One day I said to Lady Desborough,—

“ Jane, Danvers comes more to the house than formerly. I think you do wrong to encourage him.”

She turned upon me with a look of triumph.—

“ There you are again, John; always croaking on some point or another. Why should any harm ensue from his visits? Now, did you not talk in just the same strain last summer at Holmesley? Did you not tell me I was allowing him and Caroline to be too

much together? Did you not persist in fancying that they might become attached? Did you not almost frighten me by your forebodings? And now look at the result; how wrong you have been! He went, and I do not believe Carry ever thought of him again. She wrote to him occasionally on her publishing affairs, but even that she appeared to me to drop very soon; and one never heard her mention his name; I never saw her manifest the slightest interest in him afterwards. And when we came here, and every one was asking for George Danvers, and wondering where he was, she never made the least inquiry, or seemed to care whether he ever returned or not. Did you not remark that, John?"

I had remarked it, and I said so.

"And in this instance why should you dis-

like his coming to the house so much? Caroline finds him of use I dare say, and I should be very sorry to interfere with her interests in any way; it would be unkind in me. And as for Caroline ever caring for him, the thing is not to be thought of."

I was silent.

"Caroline has made so many conquests, she will make a splendid match soon; I am convinced of that. She is an odd girl, and keeps her admirers at a great distance; but I suppose she will choose at last. Certainly, she has a right to be fastidious. How much admired she is, John! and how calmly she receives all the praise and adulation showered upon her! I am indeed proud of Caroline.

"I only wish," added Lady Desborough, with a sigh—"I only wish my Julia were in better health and spirits."

Julia was not well; she was not cheerful. There was something eating at her heart, or perhaps the whirl of a London life was unsuited to her. She was not so gay or so full of health as one so young should have been.

“And then Fanny,” continued Lady Desborough — “she does not quite please me; she will not marry, and yet she has had many good offers, and actually seems to like young Murray. Of course I am delighted to have her with me, but still I had rather see her well settled. I have my troubles, John. I sometimes wish I had never undertaken the charge of all these girls.”

This was a different strain indeed to the one in which her ladyship was once wont to speak; but she had found the difference already between ruling the gentle inmates of a schoolroom, and

guiding the conduct of four full-grown young ladies, all quite inclined to have ways and wills of their own.

William also rather annoyed her by the unqualified admiration he bestowed upon Caroline—the devoted affection he manifested towards her. Much as her ladyship loved Caroline, she yet would have been sorry to have seen her the wife of William. Caroline would bring neither money nor connexion to the family. Lady Anne Grantley was better suited to the views she entertained for her son.

But William, as perverse as the rest of the party, would love no one but Caroline, who loved not him; and the more his mother wished him to turn his thoughts to some suitable alliance, the more strongly did he

persist in thinking of no one, and no amusement in which Caroline had not a share.

Caroline, now in her day of triumphs, had little time to think of him and his affection. She was sorry he should waste his love on her ; she told him so sometimes, with a smile so sweet that his chains only became riveted more closely than before. But, continuing my conversation with Lady Desborough, I said,—

“ Will you, as a favour to myself, omit asking George Danvers to Holmesley this year ? ”

She laughed.—

“ I am amused with your request, because it exactly coincides with my own determination. I have already decided upon not doing so ; but only because I really shall not be able to find a place for him. We shall be quite full all the

autumn. I mean to ask the Carlingtons and Neville again. I do not quite despair of inducing Julia to accept the latter, and I am glad to perceive that they have begun to dance together again. He is overcoming the awkwardness of the rejection. It is all very well that it should be so. I see no reason for there being a complete breach between them. Then I shall invite Mr. Hamilton again—the Duke, the Duchess, and Lady Anne—the Warburtons, the Wilsons, the Wilmots, Mr. Murray, Lord Newton, and all the men—the eligible ones I mean—who have been paying Caroline such attention. She may form more favourable ideas of some one of them at Holmesley than she has done here. And, in fact, I shall be unable to invite Danvers at all: therefore, John, I can have no difficulty in granting your request.”

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"I do not care much for the why or the wherefore, but that he is not to be at Holmesley is a matter of great rejoicing to me," I replied; "I *do* dislike that man so much."

And so I did. I hated him; and now every hour increased my hatred, for I saw how fatally he was winding himself around the heart of Caroline. And it was perfectly useless to try and open her eyes to his real character, she trusted him so implicitly.

Caroline believed herself, at this time, to be under a tacit sort of engagement to him. Certainly she had a right to construe his attentions into any shape she pleased, they were so marked; yet he had tact enough not to appear to exceed the bounds to which conventional gallantry is limited. That he had suc-

ceeded well in playing a double part may be inferred from the fact that Caroline was fully impressed with the sincerity of his attachment, and quite convinced that before the season was out he would propose to her ; while Lady Desborough, as I have shown, was so completely blinded to his conduct, that, even when I gave every possible hint, I could not make her perceive the real state of things.

I believe George Danvers was so much in love with Caroline, that, had she but persevered in her original intention of writing hard, he would have proposed to her, but, seeing as he did that, as she became more and more engrossed with her affection for him, more and more devoted to him, she also became less and less inclined to think of any other matters. he felt that it " would not do."

I think he was a little disappointed at not being invited to Holmesley that year.

As for Julia Desborough, whom I have not had time to speak much of lately, I confess I grieved to see her grow so pale and serious. A little incident which took place about this time I will here relate.

We were dining at Lord Newton's; he gave splendid entertainments; every one has heard of them. He had the best cook in town for many years. Poor Newton! he is dead; and until St. John returned from abroad, bringing with him his unrivalled *chef*, I missed him sadly.

Well, we were dining there. There was a very large party; but there was one hiatus at the table—some one had disappointed the host.

It happened that we were the last to arrive,

and the excuses of the absent individual had been received before we entered the drawing-room. No mention was made of the name of the truant guest, and we sat down to dinner in ignorance as to who had been expected, as well as of the cause that detained him or her from fulfilling the engagement.

But after dinner, when we joined the ladies, Lord Newton, whose attentions to Fanny were always very pointed, approached her, and commenced what he called "a conversation."

"Fine weather this, Miss Random, for the country. I sometimes wish I was in my little cottage on the lake, instead of in smoky London. Fresh char just in season—trout also; numbers of lakers. Delightful spot, Windermere, Miss Random; I am sure you would like it."

"I hope I shall, Lord Newton, for my estate and house are on the 'banks of Windermere.'"

"Bless me! are they? What a strange thing that we should both possess property in that part of the world! Hope we shall meet there some day. But of course you young ladies had rather remain and enjoy the gaiety of town to the last. Going to Lord Carlington's Thursday, Miss Random?—Of course. But there seems a fear that the ball may be put off."

"Put off! why?" exclaimed Fanny.

"Why, have you not heard, Miss Random, the accident in the family?"

"Accident! No; pray tell us," cried Fanny.

Lord Newton settled himself comfortably in a seat, and then commenced.

“ The Arrow, a very fine vessel—you have heard of it, Miss Random—is cruising off South America. Young Wentworth, Freddy, is one of the officers. Well, this morning appeared a statement in the papers that the Arrow had been attacked by pirates, and after a severe struggle had succeeded in capturing or sinking her opponents, she herself sustaining no injury, but losing a few men and one officer. .

“ Now the statement was copied from a private letter, unauthenticated, but it described the age, person, and rank of the deceased officer, all of which tally with those of Freddy Wentworth; and though the name was not mentioned, the family are in dreadful distress of mind concerning him. Of course, Miss Random, it is a very improbable story. Pirates are not likely to attack an English vessel of

war; but still they feel uneasy, and no wonder. Freddy is a fine young man, and such is not the death that he should die. Neville was to have dined with me to-day, but wrote to inform me of this, and giving it as a reason for his staying away. Of course all right; had he come, it would have shown a want of feeling; but I don't believe a word of it myself. These private letters in newspapers are highly improper; they must often occasion great unnecessary agitation. You see, to-day, this one has been the cause of an odd number at my table, a thing I hate—but what, what is the matter with Miss Desborough?—Miss Julia—Miss Julia, what is the matter?"

Fanny was close to her cousin. She turned round as his lordship spoke: there was poor Julia, pale as marble, leaning back in her chair—she had fainted.

In a moment Lady Desborough was by her side. I also sprang to her assistance. The watchful mother had heard the preceding conversation; she had listened with eager ears to the words of the old lord, but she had not been prepared for such an effect upon her daughter as they produced.

At first, her natural anxiety prevailed over every other feeling, and, while ministering to the pale Julia, she evidently thought only of her suffering, thought nothing of its provoking cause, thought nothing of what others might think.

But when the faint colour began to dawn on her daughter's cheek, the worldliness of her nature regained its empire; she turned hastily to Lord Newton and the company around. Speaking in an under tone, she said —

"Pray, my lord—and you, Fanny—take care and do not mention this rumour of poor young Wentworth's death before Julia when she revives; in her state I had rather you should not do so; we are so intimate with the Carlingtons; and, knowing his brother so well as she does, she would grieve so sincerely for the anxiety this report must cause the family. I had rather she should hear nothing of it until she is more composed. Now, pray, my friends," added her ladyship, energetically, "now, pray, oblige me."

I saw her meaning; others saw it too. She would not for worlds that those around us at that moment should have guessed the secret of her daughter's heart.

Fanny coloured as she turned away. Raising my eyes as her ladyship spoke, my gaze

encountered that of Lady Anne Grantley, whose glance, so full of meaning, so full of a mingled sadness and contempt, showed how thoroughly she understood the scene thus acted before her.

Her beautiful lip curled as she listened to the measured sentences of the mother; her dark eyes filled with tears as she turned them on the thin pallid face of the daughter.

But Julia at last recovered her consciousness; and Lady Desborough begged that the carriage might be ordered immediately. Julia had quite presence of mind enough to recognise her situation as she regained her consciousness, and no word or look escaped her that could gainsay the inference intended to be drawn from the speech of her mother—that she had not heard of the conjectured death of Freddy Wentworth.

She smiled while replying to the inquiries of the party, attributed her illness to the heat of the room, thanked all around in her gentle and quiet manner, and expressed herself anxious only to return home.

As she made her adieus, Lady Anne, taking her hand, said expressively—"Farewell, Miss Desborough; I wish you well." And the blush that rose suddenly to Julia's cheek showed that she perceived her secret was known at least to one.

The next day I found Lady Desborough in sad plight. She had attempted to conceal it from others, but she could not hide from herself, that the mention of Frederick Wentworth's name in conjunction with the tale of death and danger to which Lord Newton had alluded was the cause of Julia's illness; she

was much pained as the conviction of their attachment became thus forced upon her—she could not shut her eyes to the truth.

She received me in the same little ante-room in which Lord Neville had heard his final rejection from the lips of Julia; but scarcely had her ladyship commenced pouring forth to me her sorrows and her intentions, when a knock at the door gave token of visitors, and, ere a few moments more had elapsed, both were almost startled from our propriety by an announcement on the part of the footman that “Mr. Frederick Wentworth was in the drawing-room.” Mute with surprise, we both rose, and without exchanging a word we entered the drawing-room together, where *tête-à-tête* we found Julia and Frederick Wentworth.

On Julia's pale face the faint and changing colour showed that she felt emotion; in her dark soft eyes the beaming expression of pure delight told of the happiness reviving in her heart.

Thus to be made aware, by his own unlooked-for presence, of the safety of one so dear, must indeed have been happiness.

Frederick Wentworth, all unconscious of the very different emotion his presence excited in the breast of Lady Desborough, rattled away with his usual frankness and ease of manner; obtained the information that her ladyship most wished to conceal, respecting the engagements with the family, from her ladyship herself, by dint of questions so plain, that even my diplomatic cousin could not avoid giving them straightforward answers; talked

until the only expression left upon the face of Julia was one of deep calm joy, and until on Lady Desborough's brow vexation began to overpower even her natural gentleness and politeness; and took his leave at last with a cheering assurance that he would "see them all soon again."

He had been sent home with despatches, and happened to arrive the day after the report of his own death became current; that report had originated in some slight encounter too trivial to mention. He was in daily expectation, he said, of being appointed to another and superior vessel; and Lady Desborough prayed fervently that his expectations might be speedily fulfilled.

They were so; Frederick remained but a short week in town, during which time he

contrived to be at every ball, opera, dinner, *déjeuner*, that was graced by the presence of Julia; and though their attachment was never made too conspicuous, all could see that it had gained strength from absence, and now, from renewed intercourse, was increasing in steadfastness as in fervour.

It was surprising to remark how one week of happiness improved Julia: from being pale and thin, she became rosy and almost plump; from being careless, languid, listless, she became animated, cheerful, pleased with all and everything. Lady Desborough chafed beneath her own powerlessness to avert the result she so much dreaded; she hailed with sincere delight the hour which summoned Freddy Wentworth to his duties on board the frigate "Arethusa."

I have shown that Lady Desborough never would listen to me when I represented to her the danger my Caroline was incurring while exposed to the fascinations and assiduous attentions of such a man as George Danvers; but she was roused to a sense of the truth when the quiet Sir Edward, who, generally speaking, never noticed anything, himself addressed her on the subject.

“Jane, those two cannot always be talking about books. Look at them now. Let us take care, Jane; let us be careful of the happiness of this treasure committed to our charge—this my brother’s only child.”

And then, startled by these earnest words from one ordinarily so chary of speech, Lady Desborough turned with a painful foreboding to the group thus pointed out to her attention.

Even she, with all her scepticism, her trust in Caroline, her contempt for Danvers, her reliance on her own tutelage and chaperonage—even she, at last, began to doubt and to fear the truth; while there *she* sat—my Caroline, my dear Caroline, listening to sweet words—the honey that covered a bitter sting.

Lady Desborough next morning spoke seriously to Caroline on the subject.

Caroline listened in silence. Lady Desborough told her her intention was to hint to the gentleman that his attentions might be less pointed; moreover, she declared she would never consent to Caroline's throwing herself away upon such a man.

Caroline again listened in silence. She was too proud to prevaricate; she could not deny that in reality her hopes and wishes tended but to the one end her aunt so dreaded.

Lady Desborough believed, from Caroline's manner, that a perfect understanding existed between herself and Danvers. Caroline believed he loved her truly. Caroline, deceiving herself, deceived her aunt also.

Lady Desborough, addressing Danvers, intimated to him her wish that his attentions should become less marked towards her niece. She expected to hear in reply a passionate avowal of an attachment already accepted by its object; she was surprised to receive from Danvers only expressions of wonder and of deprecation—wonder that his interest in the talents of Miss Desborough should be construed into any warmer feeling—deprecation of the suspicion that *he* should so far presume, so high aspire.

“Surely,” he said, “the difference of our ages alone might have sufficiently guaranteed me against such——”

He paused.

"I spoke not from my own conviction," replied Lady Desborough, proudly. "To me there appeared many reasons why such a thing could never be. I am satisfied now that, in my own conviction of the great disparity existing, I was supported by the opinion of the principal parties concerned. I rejoice that the fears of those who urged me to this step were groundless."

George Danvers winced beneath these expressions of suppressed contempt, and bowed low that she might not remark his changing colour.

I need not recount the remainder of this interview, which terminated shortly after, though her ladyship confided all its particulars to myself, and to William, who happened

to be in her room at the time, and who lingered to listen, with a mixture of feelings too painfully apparent, to this little scene of which our Caroline was the heroine.

Her ladyship asked my advice as to whether she should repeat the conversation to Caroline.

I urged her not to do so, as I believed that Caroline would soon perceive, by his prolonged absence, that his attentions were withdrawn.

"If I thought that fellow had trifled with the affections of my cousin," said William, "an hour should not elapse but he should find he could not do so with impunity. It is not yet too late," he continued, rising. "I will seek Caroline."

"For Heaven's sake, no!" exclaimed his mother. "What! fight with such a man as Danvers?"

A moment's reflection showed William the injudiciousness of such a line of conduct; he consented to let the affair pass quietly. We soon convinced him that to make Caroline the heroine of such an *ébroulement* would be doing her the greatest possible injury.

As was expected, George Danvers discontinued his visits to "our house" almost totally after this affair, and the few that, for the sake of appearances, he still occasionally perpetrated, were invariably paid at an hour when he knew his chances of admittance to be very small.

This part of the business was met with entire satisfaction by her ladyship and myself. But, oh! what pain it was to watch the suspense, the anxiety, the anguish on the brow of Caroline.

She heard nothing from her aunt regarding

the interview between Danvers and herself that she knew had taken place. She was too proud to inquire ; she perceived that she was separated from Danvers as completely as though the ocean rolled between them ; she feared she was deserted.

One day William came to me ; he was agitated and melancholy. " I have been talking to Caroline," he said ; " I have told her all."

" Told her ! what have you told her ?"

" I could not bear to see her suffer such torments of suspense and uncertainty. I repeated to her, word for word, the interview between Danvers and my mother.

" I found her in her own room, her writing-table before her, her desk open, but she was not employed in writing ; she was sitting, her

face leaning on her hands, her long hair falling over those slender white fingers; and as she raised her head at my entrance, I saw her cheek was wet with tears.

“ ‘Caroline,’ I said, ‘I fear you may be made uneasy by being kept in ignorance of the cause of your friend Mr. Danvers’s discontinuance of his visits and attentions to yourself. Would you like to know the truth?’ ”

“ A burning flush rose to her face as I named his name; it faded to a double pallor as she answered, after a few moments’ hesitation, ‘I thank you, William.’ ”

“ I then told her all, the plain ‘unvarnished tale.’ At first she strove to meet her rising agony by a show of pride; she strove to look calmly at me, to listen with a smile, to affect a contemptuous indifference; but when I had

concluded, and, placing myself beside her, had taken her hand in mine, and implored her to forget this unworthy fancy, to turn to those who loved her truly, her heart gave way before my words; she bowed her face upon my arm, and wept bitterly. I was silent. I, too, could have wept as sadly. She raised her face.

“ ‘It is nothing, William,’ she said; and she smiled faintly, adding, ‘this has been a pleasant acquaintance, and I regret its close.’

“ ‘Oh, Caroline! do not deceive me; would *you* weep for aught so light? Alas! no; I fear you have been betrayed.’ And the lofty truth within her triumphed.

“ ‘It is true I thought he loved me,’ she said.

“ ‘Forget him, Caroline; he was unworthy

of one thought from that pure heart; forget him. Oh, Caroline! turn, turn to me.' But she heeded me not. She clasped her hands passionately.—

“ ‘ The idol hath proved a false worship, but the victim on the altar may not cease to bleed.’ Then, smiling again at her own fanciful image—then, sinking again to tears—‘ Yes, I thought he loved me.’

“ ‘ Others love you, Caroline; others love you. Listen, listen!’ But she motioned me away.—

“ ‘ Hush, William, hush! You distress me. But thank you, thank you. Be still my friend.’

“ ‘ Thy friend! Ah, Caroline!’

“ And, being too wretched by the sight of her wretchedness, I could but press my lips to her hand and turn away. I have come here,

Greville, to tell you all. Alas! what a wreck this is!"

"It is indeed," I replied. "Alas! I fear we have much to answer for. We should have guarded her better. And how she is beloved! how *I* have loved her!"

"You, Greville!" And William started.

"Not as you love her, William. Do not fear. But God knows I would lay down my life to make her happy."

This was indeed true. I never owned but one deep feeling, and that one was for Caroline.

CHAPTER IV.

AND thus, to gratify a heartless vanity, to amuse a few unoccupied hours, George Danvers had played with the feelings of Caroline, and this was the result ; and she, with her pride and her strong affections, felt most keenly the bitter wrong offered to both.

Within, the desolation and the suffering were great ; without, the semblance of indifference was well preserved. To the general eye she was the same as when Danvers was for ever at her feet—as proud, as brilliant, as calmly

triumphant; but those more immediately connected with her could see the change, and, when unconstrained by the presence of strangers, amid the truth of home, her pale cheek and sad infrequent smile gave painful evidence of the acuteness of the grief upon her heart.

I believe all (save poor Sir Edward, who missed his club sadly) were glad when the summons to Mary's wedding took us to Stanwell. Julia was pleased—she had been pleased with everything since the last visit of Frederick Wentworth; Fanny Random was pleased, for, as she said, "Of course there is a billiard-table at Stanwell, and Tom Wilmot will be there, and we will play at billiards and ride upon ponies all day long;" and Lady Desborough was quite ready to leave town—she was

anything but pleased with the events of the season; and William and I were rejoiced at the prospect of any change that was likely to interest Caroline and divert her from her sad thoughts.

Then there was great excitement shown among the young ladies as to the dresses they had to select; for the three cousins were to be the bridesmaids, in conjunction with three Miss Broughtons, grandchildren of the bishop and first-cousins to Mary.

It made our sad Caroline laugh to see the earnestness of Fanny Random while choosing a ribbon, and the flow of spirits which assailed the ordinarily sedate Julia when the bridal costume, complete and perfect, was brought from Madame Carson's for her approval.

Certainly those dresses were as pretty as

dresses could be, and the taste that dictated them was excellent.

Arrived at Stanwell, we found a large party there, and this was increased every evening by the presence of the principal families in the town and neighbourhood. The bishop gave a series of entertainments during the whole week preceding the marriage, and its eve was celebrated by a grand ball.

The Nollertons were near neighbours of the bishop, and of course they played a conspicuous part in the splendour and the gaiety of the time. Whether or no Mrs. Marston had informed his grace of her son's predilection for Lady Anne, there was no difference made in the terms upon which they were received at Stanwell; and, doubtless, the bridegroom had many a severe struggle to endure between the

lingering strength of the old love and the less assured feelings of the new.

The night in question a quadrille was formed, intended to consist only of the bride and her bridesmaids, the bridegroom and his more immediate male friends; but when the parties were marshalled it was seen that another lady was requisite to constitute an even number. Lady Anne Grantley was unanimously invited to join the group, and she consented so to do.

Placed between his bride and Lady Anne, I fancied the bridegroom looked anything but comfortable; and when, in the *grande ronde* of the last figure, their hands joined, I plainly marked the colour deepen upon his sallow cheek.

Mary, seeing and knowing nothing of all

this, was all smiles and radiance. With her magnificent complexion, her bright profuse hair, she looked like an embodied sun-ray ; but Lady Anne's face, with its expression, half melancholy, half contempt, turning sadly from the unconscious bride to the moody bridegroom, was full of a sort of pitying wonder at the man who, having once loved herself, could be persuaded into giving up that love, however hopeless, for any other upon earth.

And then, how the expression would soften as her glance rested upon William Desborough ! while he, in his turn, was watching every look, every movement of the Caroline who thought so little of him.

That quadrille presented a rare galaxy of beauty. There were the three lovely Miss Broughtons, all fair and tall and graceful ;

there was the dark-haired, dark-eyed Julia; there was the brilliant Mary Norton, the heroine of the evening; there was that beautiful Caroline; that queenly Lady Anne. Nor must I forget the merry Fanny, with all her natural grace and her thousand prettinesses, dancing with Tom Wilmot; the latter expanded from the shy Eton boy into the dashing Oxonian, and now the declared and very strong admirer of our little Fanny.

Tom Wilmot was full of fun, quite a gentleman, possessed of every good quality under the sun; but at the same time I am quite convinced that, though equal to the average in point of talent, he would never have set the Thames on fire. But Fanny used to tell me his wit, such as it was, was his greatest drawback in her eyes—"You know, cousin John, I do so hate clever people."

Whether she hated clever people or not, she certainly did not hate Tom Wilmot, and he most assuredly did love her.

Lady Desborough remarked this predilection of Fanny's for Tom Wilmot with great pleasure; it would be an unexceptionable match. The Wilmots were of high standing, large property; Tom was their only son. The thoroughbred Wilmots, commoners though they were, with their high connexions, ample means, their pure blood, their long line of distinguished ancestors, their unblemished name, occupied in Lady Desborough's estimation a position far more desirable than that conferred by the newly-bestowed honours of many a parvenu peer and peeress.

Fanny was a little older than young Wilmot, but the difference was slight, and, in point of

appearance, he looked considerably the elder of the two; and, youthful as he was, I began to have shrewd suspicions that Fanny had rejected Murray and the rest of her admirers in favour of Tom Wilmot.

The ball was over, the guests retired; the night passed, the morning rose—the bridal morning.

It rose, all cloudless sunshine; and hearts more fearful than were those of Mary and her gay cousins might have hailed as an omen of happiness the brightness of that dawn. The gloom upon the brow of the bridegroom vanished before the cheering influence. Only in the mother's breast the shadow and the doubt remained.

On that day, the brilliant party gathered round the lovely bride showed many a brilliant

and joyous face, anticipating only a continuation and increase of happiness. Unlike many a wedding group, this seemed to own no cause for fear or trembling; scarce aught but smiles was to be seen within, as without was nought but sunshine.

But beneath the fairest bosom of those that throbbed with the hour's excitement the canker-worm was at work, and the deep grief, hidden, was not less strong. Yet Caroline belied not the brilliant scene, the happy countenances around her, by the display of her own sorrow; she bore her part bravely. Lady Norton only, turning sadly to the memory of a miserable past and dreading the unknown future, pale, weak, agitated, shed inauspicious tears upon the altar of her daughter's vows. Among the guests at the

festivities of the time, and among the party that accompanied the bridal procession to the chapel in the cathedral of Stanwell, where the ceremony took place, I particularly noticed a young man, first-cousin to Mr. Marston, and one of his greatest friends; perhaps I should be nearer the truth if I said his only friend.

I had often heard of Marmaduke Lincoln, as being the constant associate of Marston, and as being, next to his mother, the one who possessed most influence over him. I had also heard that this influence was always well exercised; that, though silent and unobtrusive, it was powerful; that to its good guidance might be ascribed the existence of most of the favourable points in Marston's conduct, of *all* the noble actions of his life.

His mother, always with him, always watching him, presented daily to his view the rules for the guidance of his every-day conduct; the smallest trifles connected with his establishment, his tenants, the part he played as a man of large property and high standing, his choice of associates, even the names upon his visiting list—these were regulated by her busy policy. But the few bright portions of his character, the few fine ideas of his mind, the few noble impulses of his heart, might be attributed to the lessons he had imbibed from the conversation and example of this cousin. Marmaduke Lincoln.

I had heard of all the splendid qualities of this poor relative—his genius, his intellect, his almost heavenly disposition and temper.

He acted as chief bridesman to Marston.

and, knowing him from report as I did, I augured well for the happiness of the young bride as I watched the soft eyes of Lincoln fixed upon her with an expression of no common interest, an expression that seemed to promise support, to offer a protecting tenderness.

Lincoln was not regularly handsome, but his was a face made, by the vivid changes of expression, always one of uncommon interest; and sometimes a brighter flashing forth of the mind within, visible on the broad brow and in the deep dark eyes, gifted it with an almost divine beauty. Tall and well made, his appearance was that of a thorough gentleman, and such he was, both by nature and education. He was the only child of one of Marston's paternal aunts, who had married a

poor man, though one of very high family and connexions.

He died, however, before these had had time to do anything for him, leaving his widow with but a small income, which, from the unfortunate failure of the bank in which the majority of this had been placed, had for a time rendered her almost penniless. But she had wealthy relations, and she resided with her brother, who at her death solemnly engaged to her to protect and provide for her infant child.

Marmaduke had been educated for the bar, but his taste was for another calling, and at the age of twenty-six he quitted this profession, and applied himself to reading for orders; he had already graduated from Oxford. It was at this era of his life that I first saw

him, on the occasion of the marriage of Mary Norton.

Since that time he has been constantly before my eye. I have marked with increased feelings of admiration and respect his pure unblemished course.

How few there are like him ! What a world this would be if all men were such as he is ! 'Tis true, this could not be, for then such characters as his would lose their vocation.

Gifted with a brilliant intellect, a noble genius, these were not as tempters leading him astray, but as burning lights to guide the warm impulses of that benevolent heart, to give energy to the dictates of that gentle and charitable spirit.

His has been a life spent in all blessed exercises, in active yet unostentatious benevo-

lence, in unremitting charity, in holy offices, soothing the wretched, healing the broken hearts with words of peace, turning the sinner from evil, saving the wavering soul alive, showing the weary the way to rest, the contrite the door to repentance. His is the purest charity—that which believeth all things, hopeth all things. His is a large faith—looking for good even in the midst of apparently hopeless evil, turning not from the vilest and the blackest, striving still to save.

What a character is his!—so lofty, yet so meek; pure, yet shrinking not from contact with those most defiled by sin; superior to most in gifts and acquirements, yet without one spark of vanity; revered openly by all, yet humble as a child!

Marmaduke Lincoln, with his philanthropy,

his unselfishness, his trust in others, his loving, hopeful, unsuspecting nature, formed a strange contrast to the acute but worldly and self-seeking Mrs. Marston ; yet Marston, with the usual inconsistency of his mind, was equally influenced by each of these very opposite characters, and placed almost implicit confidence in each.

But the rule of his mother was one engendered and strengthened by circumstance and habit ; his deference to his cousin was but that natural homage the weak pay to their superiors in intellect.

“ If this man,” I thought, “ could but find favour in the eyes of Caroline, how happy she might be with him—how blessed might he be in her !” And for a long time I cherished this hope and encouraged this fond

dream ; but learned at last the vanity of both ;
for Lincoln, if he ever loved, loved not Caro-
line ; and she, for ever musing, gave not one
thought to him.

CHAPTER V.

ALL this time Caroline had not been idle. She wrote with redoubled assiduity ; she was no longer interrupted by delightful thoughts, no longer absorbed in pleasing reveries. She had no more happy dreams to dream ; she gave herself up entirely to her literary occupations—writing, partly to flee from her own thoughts, partly to obtain means to realize the not-forgotten project respecting her parents. She also seemed actuated by a feeling of revenge. She had learned to perceive the true

cause of George Danvers's desertion of her; she perceived how mercenary he was, how completely his love had faded before his knowledge of her want of fortune. She resolved to "achieve wealth," if not "greatness," that he might repent, when too late, the blindness with which he had cast away the richer prize of her heart.

Caroline's novel "came out." It was duly advertised in the papers, duly puffed in the reviews. It met with decided success; but still I felt that Caroline might do better.

But it fully realized the expectations of her publisher, as was proved by the liberal offer he made for her next book. Feeling her power, Caroline roused herself to display it: she produced a brilliant work.

Before the next season Caroline found her-

self at the summit of literary lionship: she was the rage of the day; and the calmer fiat of later years has stamped her name with lasting praise.

But Caroline's genius lay in poetry, and after a time she published a volume of poems, and continued to contribute verses occasionally to the superior periodicals.

But poetry, though in those days the fashion, does not "make money" like prose; therefore Caroline wrote novels, because she considered it her duty to make a fortune, and wrote verses only for recreation.

And now, who more admired, more sought after, than Caroline? Alike for her beauty and her genius was she worshipped.

Do not think my Caroline a *blus*—a female pedant; she was nothing of the kind. She

made no pretensions to uncommon learning; she rarely entered into argument, never upon literary subjects. Those who knew Caroline only by her works were astonished, upon inquiring "who that lovely, gentle, ladylike creature was, with the beautiful dark eyes," to receive for answer, "Oh, that is Miss Desborough, the authoress."

But save in this project she took interest in nothing. Months and years rolled away and found her still the same—indifferent to admiration, turning ever from the voice of love.

Her cousin, William Desborough, retained his affection for her. His calm, apparently indifferent character was one capable of deep and lasting feelings. He cared little for the society of women, and, when Caroline rejected him, it never seemed to enter his

head that there were hundreds of others, almost as lovely as she, who would be only too glad to accept him.

So he continued to grow gradually into a state of confirmed old-bachelorship; and she continued to publish novels, and receive money for them, until the day arrived when Caroline was enabled to write thus to her parents:—"I have realized an independence; return and share it with your child." And to her happiness, doubtless in answer to her many earnest prayers, the life of her mother was spared, and she was permitted to behold her again.

Sir Edward was quite wild with delight at seeing his brother once more; the tears rolled down his round, comfortable-looking cheeks as he clasped that brother to his heart, and, gazing anxiously in his face, tried to recall

some traces of the fair, handsome youth of five-and-twenty, who, eight-and-twenty years before, had parted with him in the very room in which they now again met. Tears coursed over the sallow, shrivelled face of the returned Indian; while his little infirm wife, once as gay and as handsome as himself, lay helplessly in the arms of Caroline and wept aloud. Caroline's genius had long been a matter of pride to them, now her beauty and grace inspired them with an equal delight; and then, the happiness of being once more in dear old England, the warm reception bestowed upon them by Lady Desborough and the host of cousins assembled to receive them, seemed almost to overpower them with the mixture of feelings all this occasioned. And Caroline, as she disengaged herself from the sobbing group, turning to me,

said, with a faint smile lighting up her pale sweet face and shining through her tears,—

“ Ah, cousin John! I feel really almost happy.”

But I saw that, as soon as she had spoken, she repented of what she said, for she seldom alluded to the past, and, least of all, to me.

She seemed to feel a sort of shame whenever the remembrance of our many conversations on the subject of George Danvers recurred to her. She had always been so confident in his merits, so convinced of his sincerity; she had always turned so impatiently from me when I ventured to promulgate my opinions, my warnings, and my doubts; and now these evil bodings had been so sadly realized.

With William the case was different; she was not too proud to own to him that she had

been deceived in her only attachment, that she was unhappy in consequence, that her heart was capable of no second love.

William and Caroline were constant companions; she would sit for hours and listen to him while he read aloud her favourite passages from the authors she most admired, and she would forget the reader while listening to that murmured music.

But not so with William; he never forgot Caroline; to him she was all in all; and he, too, would sit for hours and watch her in her various occupations—writing, singing, drawing; but whether listening or looking, Caroline, Caroline only, was the object of his looks and thoughts; nothing wooed his mind from herself.

Sometimes, with a touch of her old enthu-

siasm, she would recite some of the splendid poetry she delighted so to read or to hear; she would repeat it with her whole soul given to its beauty—her eyes swimming, her cheek glowing, her voice trembling; so deeply did she feel the passion and the power of the words she spoke, she thought not how every syllable she uttered added a link to the chain in which she already held her cousin.

One would have thought that this unceasing devotion would have met with some reward at last; but it was not so. Caroline seemed to feel that she could not rouse herself into active affection for William, and she felt that he was worthy of more than the sort of passive gratitude with which she endured his lavish fondness—a fondness which time and disappointment seemed only to increase.

Lady Desborough saw with pain how completely her son's passion for his cousin seemed to preclude the chance of his forming any matrimonial alliance ; Julia regretted, for her brother's sake, the indifference of Caroline to his suit ; while I mourned in secret over that fine nature—those noble qualities, so capable of bestowing happiness, but to all good purpose lost for ever—that warm heart, beating only to its own misery—those pure and deep affections, withered by an early blight, and no longer retaining power to bestow themselves even upon a love so faithful as that now offered at their shrine,

CHAPTER VI.

BEAUTIFUL, but comparatively portionless and without rank, Mary Norton was looked upon as an especial favourite of fortune, in having thus achieved the conquest of one of the richest commoners in England. Lady Desborough had cause to congratulate herself upon the success of her chaperonage.

One consequence of the marriage was, that her ladyship was content to leave the rest of her household in peace for a time: she was so

satisfied with this connexion, and so agreeably occupied with receiving and replying to congratulations, and answering inquiries after the young couple, that she had no leisure left to urge William to marry, Julia to smile on Lord Neville, Fanny to accept young Murray. Like a conqueror reposing upon the banners he has won, she rested for a space, thinking enough had been achieved for one season.

And yet, in truth, Lady Desborough had little to do with the "engagement" which took place under her nominal sanction. The bishop and Mrs. Marston concocted the alliance, and on their heads shall be the consequence; let them answer for its happiness or its misery, its virtue or its guilt.

After the marriage, Mary and her husband proceeded to a seat belonging to Marston in

Hampshire; in the autumn they went abroad; they passed the winter at Rome.

Mary wrote regularly home, both to her mother and to Lady Desborough; but her letters to the latter were infinitely more confidential and unreserved than those to the former.

Her husband never read her letters, nor was she permitted to see those he addressed to Mrs. Marston; in the early days of their union, however, he constantly offered for her inspection the beautifully written epistles of *Marmaduke Lincoln*.

In these she found her own name always mentioned in terms of respectful affection: the writer would dwell upon her attractive qualities, her youth, her beauty, her inexperience; he would commend her with an earnest interest to the affections and tenderness of her husband.

These letters invariably created a fresh spring of happiness and cheerfulness in the mind and manner of her husband; it seemed as though the praises of one so discerning as Marmaduke gave her a double value in his eyes. Perhaps he was glad to find his mother's choice ratified by the opinion of his friend; he was glad of an additional argument wherewith to answer, to strive to refute, the constant urgings of his own rebellious and unforgetting heart.

Mary's first letters were full of happiness. "Rome was such a dear old ruinous place." "Edward had given her such lovely cameos." "Dear Edward had bought her such a splendid harp." This was the ordinary strain.

Then a slight change took place, and, instead of "dear Edward," it was "Marston is not fond of society, but I have been to some very

pleasant parties myself. It is very odd he does not care for gaiety."

I thought it "very odd" that he should leave his young wife, the first winter of their union, to visit alone in the mixed society of the continent; but, when I ventured to express this opinion, Lady Desborough replied that "perhaps it was strange; but, with such splendid ornaments as Mary possessed, and with her beauty, of course he could not expect her to remain at home with him instead of displaying these in public."

Other letters, received from Rome by other parties, described Mary as the beauty of the day—the most flattered, followed, admired, of all the host of the lovely and the distinguished. Every one spoke of her personal charms, her gay equipage, her brilliant *soirées*; but no one

named Marston : he seemed to be a cipher who possessed this worshipped creature.

Lady Desborough looked upon this as all right. She herself had always been at the head of affairs. But I sometimes fancied that things did not go on quite so smoothly with the Marstons as they had always done with her ladyship and Sir Edward.

Spring found the Marstons in Paris, and the following letter from Mary, received by Lady Desborough, will perhaps show the aspect of affairs better than I should depict them :—

“ My dear Aunt,

“ Here we are in Paris; and certainly it is a most delightful place, and the people are the very nicest people in the world. I cannot tell you how much I enjoy myself; and so many

of our old acquaintances are here, that I never feel the want of society. It is very fortunate that I should have met so many kind friends, otherwise I should have been quite at a loss ; for Marston is so very averse to company of any description, I cannot get him out anywhere.

“ He is fond of music ; but when he goes to the Opera with me, if any of our friends join us, it appears completely to destroy the pleasure of the evening for him, and many days must pass before he ventures to accompany me again. When I give my balls and *soirées* he never appears. Our dinner guests, certainly, are all of his selection ; but I cannot describe to you what a set of horrors he invites.

“ He takes pleasure in no society save that of a few uncouth artists, musicians, and creatures that he denominates ‘ men of science ;’

and the only people he is civil to are those dowdy Boltons, and this only because he has met them for the last few years regularly at the Nollertons', as if that was any reason; in fact, my husband is the very strangest man I know, and you will not wonder, after all I have told you, if I say that I see as little of him as one could well do of a person who always resides in the same place with oneself.

" Oh, my dear aunt! I do wish you would all come here—you, and my uncle, and Julia, and Caroline, and Fanny, and William; it would be so delightful! And Marston is always teasing me to return to England, and if you come he will not like to urge me so much. He says the country is the place to spend the spring and summer in, and wants me to go and bury myself alive with his mother and himself;

and indeed, dear aunt, even that I should not mind if he would promise to ride out with me, but he says he does not like riding, and does not think there is ever any occasion to leave the park and grounds of Marston Hall, where there is quite sufficient space for exercise. Now, isn't he a very odd man?

“ But the shops here are so fascinating! I feel tempted to buy so many things that I do not want. Certainly Marston Hall will be improved by a little tasteful *bijouterie*, and I always choose what I think will look well upon those ponderous marble tables. And then such lovely lace! I have bought a splendid robe of Brussels point—I am sure you will admire it; and I have had my emeralds reset (I dared not take the same liberty with the family

diamonds); and I have chosen a Cachmere shawl, which I mean to try and make my dear aunt accept when we meet again. And now, dear aunt, before I tell you of all my engagements, and complete the list of my purchases, I must first make you promise not to say a word to mamma about Marston's queer ways. She is so very melancholy ! Perhaps if she fancies I am not happy it may distress her. But, indeed, I am happy, only it is not my husband who makes me so."

And the remainder of the epistle was devoted to descriptions of the fashions, accounts of various gay scenes in which she had been engaged, and a list of the names of her acquaintance.

Lady Desborough very prudently exhibited

this letter only to myself, and I kept her counsel and named the matter to no one living.

About the same time Marston wrote to his mother. This is part of that letter :—

“ To say, my mother, that I am happy, would be to deceive you. You ask me if I am happy : I answer—No ; and I fear it will never be otherwise.

“ How could you drive me into this match ? Yet, though I thus address you, do not think I would reproach you. I know that all you have done was done to make me happy, and you ask me if I am so, and I answer—No.

“ She was not made for me ; she is too young, too gay, too thoughtless ; she cannot understand me. I know my nature is to be

cold and silent; but my coldness is not want of heart, my silence is not sullenness.

“ But Mary believes me to be both unfeeling and sullen: she does not comprehend how the life she loves so well can be distasteful to me; she thinks my withdrawing from the crowds she delights in a proof of my want of kindly feeling, of affection for my species. In her eyes I am only a surly misanthrope, or worse—one who seeks amusement in scenes and society inferior to his station.

“ But, alas! she knows me not.

“ Indeed, my mother, she never loved me; and, let me to my shame confess it, I do not love—I never did love her.

“ I told you how it would be. Yet, my mother, to your persuasion do I owe this;—

no; rather let me say, to my own want of firmness, of self-trust.

“ You know how I always disliked mixed society, yet she can exist only in the midst of crowds. You know how fond I am of literature; Mary cares for no books beyond the novel of the day. I love the country; I love peace and peaceful pursuits, and home and home occupations; but she places her happiness in display—in noise, and whirl, and excitement. And how can we be happy together ?

“ Then, music—you know I understand it, and seek consolation in listening to the strains I love; and I fancied I should find it while my young wife touched the chords of her harp; but that charm even has passed away, for I look in vain for the soul that was wont

to swell forth in those songs and from that voice which I may never hear again.

“ Alas! my mother; you remember who I mean—you know how well I loved! And that voice and those songs may now be ringing in your ears, for which mine must ever yearn—how vainly!

“ Do not think I undervalue my beautiful bride. I own her to be lovely, good, and gentle; but I looked for something more in the woman with whom I must pass my life. She is too thoughtless, too gay, too ignorant of human nature and of the heart of man. A stronger spirit should have been chosen to guide one so weak and wayward as my own.”

The letter did not end here. It contained a list somewhat similar to Mary's, only the engagements, the gaieties, the fêtes, were de-

nounced as grievances, instead of being boasted of as *agréments* of the highest order; and all that in the eyes of poor Mary rendered Paris so delightful was mentioned by him as constituting it the most detestable of residences.

The dowager was somewhat alarmed at the receipt of this epistle. She knew her son's disposition—the last in the world calculated to overcome the obstacles to happiness which the light and frivolous character of his wife seemed to present. She pondered seriously over the best means to adopt to avert the estrangement evidently taking place between the young couple.

In this strait she did not apply to her old confidant and ally, the bishop, but she turned for advice and succour to one on whose secrecy she could rely, whose noble and Christian

spirit would not hesitate to undertake any task, however painful, would set at nought all personal inconvenience, could he but do aught to close the breach between those two who had so lately vowed to each other all love and honour until death.

She turned to Marmaduke Lincoln. She found her appeal answered. Marmaduke, the only man who possessed influence over her son, expressed himself willing to exert it to the utmost; and Mrs. Marston, when she saw him depart for Paris, felt that she had employed the only means efficient to save her son and daughter-in-law from the probable painful result of that incompatibility of disposition which she now, too late, perceived.

How Lincoln's mission was fulfilled the subjoined letters will manifest:—

LETTER I.

From Mary to Lady Desborough.

“My dear Aunt,

“Since I wrote to you, an unexpected but most welcome change has taken place in our household, caused by the arrival of my husband’s cousin, Marmaduke Lincoln; and since he came we have all been as happy as possible. Before, I could not sometimes help feeling, in the midst of my own happiness, that Edward must be very dull; yet I could not accuse myself in any way: he would not come out with me, and how could I be expected to stay always at home with him? But now Marmaduke is here, and every one is happy, and everything goes well. His coming seems to have broken a spell. Edward’s good-

humour and cheerfulness returned immediately, and mine became, if possible, increased by this delightful change. I am sure I cannot account for it. I do not know how he manages to bring sunshine and smiles into every home he enters, and to every heart that loves him. And all love him. My dear aunt, I cannot describe his fascinations of character. Generally speaking, *very good* people are so disagreeable; but he is all goodness, and yet his powers of conversation and of entertainment exceed those of any man I ever met. I wish I had his power of pleasing Marston, for, indeed, if Edward were always as he is while Marmaduke is here, I should soon love him very much.

“ Now we all ride together, drive together, walk together. When I go out, the gentlemen

accompany me ; when I give my parties, they remain at home with me, and do all they can to assist me in entertaining my guests.

“ Now, when any conversation is carried on, Marmaduke always contrives to bring it round to some subject which I understand, and which my husband and myself can both converse upon. When music is proposed, he takes care to ask me to sing my best songs, and to play the airs that he knows I play well ; and sometimes he joins me in a duet, and Edward looks so pleased, and sometimes quite proud of me. If we always lived in this way, we should be indeed a happy couple.

“ And then, my dear aunt, the loveliest little hats are worn by married women at the Opera ; and they become me, Edward says, more than

anything I wear ; and I am so glad I am married, or I could not wear them.

“ And now I have said all, except that we both think Marmaduke would make Carry the most delightful husband ; he is so much in her style, so clever, so good, so enthusiastic, so fond of books and poetry, so very superior. But when I tell him so, he only laughs, and does not appear at all in love with her ; and I suppose, if he were, our Caroline would care as little for him as she does for her other admirers : so it is best as it is.

“ Dear Aunt, adieu !”

&c. &c. &c.

LETTER II.

From Edward Marston to his Mother.

" My dearest Mother,

" It gave me great pleasure to hear from Lincoln the account of your good health and spirits; it was also a great pleasure to us to receive him as our guest.

" The influence of his good heart, and strong common sense, and perfect temper, is really extraordinary. One day produced the greatest change in the feeling that existed between myself and Mary, and now, instead of coldness, dissatisfaction, and estrangement, our house is cheered by the presence of continual confidence and mutual affection.

" Marmaduke, more gentle and conciliating

than myself, more acute in discerning character, and more adroit in acting according to that discernment, contrives to draw out all my wife's good qualities, to make manifest all her accomplishments, in a manner that I could never attain; and the consequence is, she gains upon my heart every day, and every day seems to increase her regard for me. My last letter would tell you my miserable feelings; judge then how delightful is this change to me.

“ And Mary, poor girl, seems as happy—nay, more so—while remaining quietly at home. listening to, or joining in our conversation, or singing and playing the airs which *Marmaduke* names, than when she is in the midst of all that hateful whirl of gaiety, the brilliant idol of a heartless fawning circle.

“ I have also taken more pleasure in society

since my cousin arrived. He seemed to wish to accompany Mary on some of her visits. I could not remain at home in that case, and I found his company made even those senseless crowds bearable ; and it really is a matter of no small pride to me to remark the admiration and attention my wife receives everywhere and from all.

“ Of course I can no longer urge Mary to return to England. Marmaduke having come expressly to see Paris, I shall not mention departing until his time is expired, and then I shall hope to induce Mary to consent to our all crossing together ; and while Marmaduke is here I shall feel quite reconciled to remaining.

“ Once in England, I shall find ample occupation for some time to come in attending to

the arrears of affairs my absence must have created. I shall have much to say to you, my dearest mother, much to listen to in return; and when the day has dawned that shall make me a father, will there not be for me a new source of happiness, of which nothing on earth, save death, can deprive me? My babe will learn to love its father. Alas! the love of instinct is the only one to trust. For a few years my child will love me because I am its father, and I may yet hope to experience a feeling free from jealousy, free from sickening disappointment, from mortification.

“For a few years!—and then, as the powers of reason dawn in his little heart, his affection will follow his choice and will; my child will perceive how little there is in me to claim his love or admiration.

“ But I fancy I see you smile, dear mother, at such idle speculations. There is time enough yet for these forebodings.”

There was nothing more in the letter relating to his wife, and I need not transcribe the dull details of business which followed. This also was the first communication Mrs. Marston had received from her son in which no mention, direct or indirect, was made of Lady Anne Grantley.

These letters will show how great a difference of character existed between these two, whom human ties had linked indissolubly together. Marston, so gloomy, so saturnine—Mary, so wildly gay; he, shrinking even from thoughts of the future—she, so full of an

almost childish delight of anticipation; he, already weary of existence, disgusted with the world—she, just springing forth across its joyous threshold, herself the very essence of brilliant life.

Marmaduke Lincoln remained with them a fortnight, at the end of which period he expressed his intention of returning to England; and Mary, when requested to do so by her husband, signified her willingness to leave Paris at the same time. Marmaduke had laboured, nor in vain, to restore the existence of a cordial feeling between them. He had brought out Mary's many brilliant and attractive qualities before the eyes of her husband with a quiet tact that concealed his object from both parties; and he had gently instilled into her mind the necessity of yielding her own

wishes and whims to those of the man she had sworn to "honour and obey."

Returned to England, the young couple proceeded at once to Marston Hall. Mary had hinted a wish to remain a short time in town, but Marston expressed himself so decidedly averse to this, that she forbore to urge the point.

At Marston Hall at first the time passed pleasantly enough. Although they had now been married nearly a twelvemonth, this was the first visit they had paid to his ancestral home, and great were the rejoicings and welcomings that met them on their return.

Mary's brilliant smiles and affable behaviour won all hearts: high and low, rich and poor, all had love and admiration for her. Old Mrs. Marston was delighted with the "popu-

larity" acquired so directly by her daughter-in-law.

Mary's letters at this period were full of gaiety and cheerfulness ; everything seemed to bear a pleasant aspect in her eyes ; even the stern dowager was pronounced " a dear old creature." And Marmaduke Lincoln was mostly there to watch over her conduct and her happiness ; he was there to cheer the gloomy Marston with praises of his beautiful wife ; he was there to urge him forth into the society of his equals, to impress upon him the impropriety of allowing that fair wife to visit in the numerous circle of the neighbourhood unattended by himself ; he was there to speak of her always as the future mother of the heir of Marston — of the child whose coming was longed for so

ardently. But Marmaduke was obliged to quit them; the time of his ordination had arrived, and the curacy to which he was to be ordained was in a distant county.

After his departure, Mary, in her letters, began to complain of the dullness of the place. The excitement caused by their arrival had passed away, and Marston began to resume his old habits of burying himself all day in his library, and of seeking no society save that of his tenants and stewards.

The old tempers began to return upon him, the old gloominess, the old reserve; he either could not, or would not, rouse himself to anything. Mary's walks and drives and rides became solitary ones, save when occasionally the infirm dowager ventured forth with her on

some shopping or calling expedition to Stanwell or the neighbourhood.

Mary never loved him, or she would have borne with all his infirmities of temper; she would have put in practice all the thousand innocent arts love teaches to win him from his moody contemplations. He never loved her, or he would have found happiness sufficient in living with and only for her.

Too late Mrs. Marston perceived how terribly she had risked her son's happiness; she saw how hard the task was to preserve a good understanding between them, and time, she felt, would most probably render that task yet more difficult; and she also owned some slight touches of remorse as she pondered over the contemplation of the fate most likely to

await her beautiful daughter-in-law—so lovely, so young, so highly gifted, and given so early to one who valued her not. And still, as she gazed and pondered, a harsh accusing voice would seem continually to cry—*Too late, too late!*

But, just as matters had reached a rather deplorable crisis, a child was born—a girl; and all the coldness and the estrangement passed before the joy of that hour.

Marston behaved extremely well during the whole affair. He manifested the greatest anxiety for the health and safety of his wife, and hailed the coming of his daughter with positive rapture. Mrs. Marston expressed some disappointment that it was not a boy, but he seemed quite content; and, owing to his affection for the baby, the nurses and various

female ministers at that time in employ took a violent fancy for him, and his character as a "dear sweet gentleman" became, in consequence, completely established throughout the kitchens and nurseries of the county.

Lady Desborough, Sir Edward, and Julia, were with Mary during her confinement, and, when all was over, Lady Norton, Caroline, and Fanny arrived; William and myself had gone to shoot in Scotland.

Marmaduke Lincoln also managed to run down and spend a clergyman's fortnight with them, and a very merry, happy party did they constitute. Marmaduke christened the "little stranger" (I believe that is the correct term) by the name of Jane, after Lady Desborough. Lady Norton requested particularly that the child should not bear her name.

"Do not perpetuate a name," she said, "to which so much of misery is attached. I have borne it too long; let it be forgotten when I die."

And so the baby was called Jane.

Day followed day, and, one by one, the gay christening guests departed — Marmaduke to resume the duties of his curacy; the Desborough party proceeded to Holmesley, with the exception of Julia, who remained to pay a long visit at Marston Hall.

Lady Norton also returned home, notwithstanding her daughter's earnest entreaties to her to remain. Her conduct towards Mary continued to partake of the strangeness and eccentricity she manifested towards all. She would often visit her, but never for more than

a day or two: she would come unexpectedly, and depart as abruptly.

She appeared to take great interest in the happiness of her only child; she would watch with an intense anxiety the conduct of her husband towards her; every action that passed, every word that fell, seemed to be noted by her and treasured in her memory. Marston, generally moody and abstracted—Mary, always careless and thoughtless—failed to remark this watchful anxiety; but Mrs. Marston noted it with jealous eyes. She was at last fully aware how small was the chance of happiness for the young pair she had been so instrumental in bringing together, and she became nervously anxious to conceal this fact from others. Her whole efforts now were directed

to preserving a smooth surface—in short, to “keeping up appearances.”

It was long before she ventured to address herself to her son upon the subject, not until some time after the birth of the child, not until the favourable change in his conduct occasioned by this event had been superseded by a relapse into his ancient asperity and coldness. She had felt some difficulty in alluding to a subject which had already caused so many painful discussions between them—some shame when she reflected how to her persuasion alone were owing all the evils that now seemed besetting his path.

And when she did allude to his mode of life, how sad and how unsatisfactory were his replies!

“My dear mother,” he said, “you must

blame yourself for all that now seems to displease you. Do not think me harsh or undutiful in speaking to you thus, but indeed I cannot change my nature. Before you chose for me this frivolous child as my wife, you should have changed me in all things; you should have made me forget the past, you should have given me a new heart, and a spirit fresher and brighter than mine ever was or ever can be.

“No two people, dear mother, can be more unsuited to each other than Mary and myself. I told you so long ago; I repeat it now—repeat it from a sad experience; but it is now too late—I cannot break from my bonds. All I can do is to forget them, and to find such interest and amusement as I can in the everyday occupations and duties of my station. Let

Mary do the same, and I will oppose her wishes and inclinations in no way, provided she will not interfere with mine. And do you, dear mother, cease to name this subject to me—it can do no good. All I ask is to be left in peace.”

Such was poor Marston’s reply.

Once the dowager, in the course of a drive with Mary, alluded to Marston’s depression and dislike to society, hypocritically wondering what could be the cause, while she sincerely deplored the fact; and Mary’s ingenuous answer only showed her utter ignorance of all that her interlocutor was so well acquainted with.

“ Indeed I do not know why Edward is so dull. I do all I can, I assure you, dear Mrs. Marston; I do nothing but talk, and laugh, and sing, and play all day long; and I offer

continually to ride, or walk, or drive with him; but it is all of no use. Indeed, dear madam, I do all that I can."

And Mrs. Marston felt that she spoke the truth; she did "do all she could."

But where the force of circumstances, not choice, have united two uncongenial spirits, all efforts of third parties are unavailing. Even Marmaduke Lincoln felt that nothing could prevent, ere long, an open rupture between them; for Mary, at last, grew weary of trying to please, and Edward seemed every day less and less disposed to make himself agreeable to his young wife.

What a terrible thing that "incompatibility of temper" is! terrible when discovered too late by hearts that really love or have loved; but how much more hopeless the state of

affairs when the discovery takes place between those who originally have been united by other ties than those of attachment, when no remembrance of past raptures, no lingering of the once deep-rooted affection, remains to avert for a season the inevitable consequences.

Mary and Marston never quarrelled; had they done so, there might have been some hopes; but it was a coldness continually increasing that subsisted between them: on Mary's part, the result of complete indifference to her husband; on his, the result of contempt for his wife, hatred of the ties that held him, and an obstinate turning back upon past scenes and hopes which he knew might never be realized—never could have been.

A man of more firmness of character, of more energy, would have banished from his

mind all these weak yearnings, and would have drawn sufficient happiness from the abundant sources around him. A man of a more generous nature would have striven to make the partner of his life happy, even while conscious that his own fate was marred by their union; but Marston learned at last to look upon his wife as the cause of his misery, and to visit her with his dislike, almost with his vengeance, as that cause, not as the unfortunate sharer of the fate to which a cold-hearted policy had doomed them both—a victim as devoted as himself, far more innocent and helpless.

I, as an old bachelor, can speak only of these things theoretically; but surely, if there is a hell on earth, it must be an ill-assorted marriage. Talk of Procrustes, of Noxentius, he

who bound the living to the dead—their torments could be nothing to those which must embitter every moment of the existence thus rendered, by the very means which should have constituted its supreme happiness, a burden to its possessors, and a scandal or a pity to all who witness the result.

I know a couple who continually assure me that no idea can reach the extent of the felicity they, as married lovers, enjoy; but the reverse of the picture must be even more extreme in its opposite of infelicity, where there is feeling to feel all the terrible truth of that false position.

Had Marston been merely the heartless man of the world, he would have cared little for the failure of his efforts for domestic bliss. But he was something better—he had a heart, he had

a soul; and though with little of the good or the noble in his character, he would, under different auspices, have been a very different man; he might have made the happiness of a being even yet more worthy of happiness than was my Mary.

And Mary—she, had he treated her as he should have done, would have been most estimable as a wife and mother; but, as it was, she learned too soon to undervalue the comforts of home, to place her happiness in receiving admiration, in shining among others as bright and as frivolous as herself, in giving her whole energies to the pursuit of what the world calls pleasure.

It soon became apparent to all that the Marstons were an “indifferent” couple; and while some blamed his gloomy reserve and shy

dislike to society, others shook their heads and said, "they did not wonder—who could?—that the Marstons did not live happily, when she was always racketing about at that rate;" while the goodnatured part of the world came nearest to the truth when it murmured, "no doubt there were faults on both sides, but she was so young one could not feel surprised that she was fond of company and gaiety."

But time rolled away, and affairs again wore a better aspect. Mary bore another child—this time a son; an heir was born to the house of Marston, and great were the rejoicings thereat.

Great indeed were the rejoicings. As soon as the young mother had recovered her strength,

invitations were issued far and near; all who had any connexion with the family, on either side, were summoned to partake in the general festivities.

For a week the mansion and grounds were thrown open to all, the tenants were feasted in the great hall, the villagers danced each evening upon the lawns, and dined beneath tents erected for the purpose. Within, each hour brought some new shape of pleasure, each day brought the sumptuous banquet, each night the brilliant ball; party after party arrived as guests; temporary buildings were erected to increase the accommodation; every little village and farm-house on the estate was crowded with accommodating bachelor guests, or unaccommodating domestics of the said guests; the whole country, in fact, was in a state of ferment—oxen were roasted

whole, bonfires were lit, ale flowed like water, wine like small beer.

During the whole time the Desborough party were on a visit at the hall, myself among the number. Among others who also remained throughout the week were the Wilmots. The Nollertons were there on several occasions, and Mary's good heart prompted her to invite even the bores of her single life, as well as the friends and companions:—Miss Clapham, Anecdote Hamilton, Mrs. Duff, *et hoc genus omne*, the blues of the Holmesley circle; nay, even some of the lions—Harrison, and Brunton, and the grim editor of former days, still an editor and still grim; and old Lord Newton, and many who would never have been selected for their individual quali-

ties, had not Mary's abounding good-nature interfered in their favour.

Marmaduke Lincoln of course was there; but, though Mary did everything she could to throw them together, he would not fall in love with Caroline, nor would Caroline fall in love with him.

Marston, at once excited and softened by the circumstances of the moment, was all that he should have been, exhibiting the most rapturous delight at the arrival of the young heir, continuing to manifest a lively affection for his eldest child, and acting towards his wife in a manner most creditable to himself and most satisfactory to herself and her friends.

Lady Norton, charmed with this, with the increased beauty and undiminished spirits of

her daughter, with the brilliant position she held, the popularity she enjoyed, the interest she excited, the adulation she received from all, seemed at last to have found a source of happiness. The gloom partially vanished from her countenance, the strangeness from her manner; she no longer disquieted herself with forebodings for the future fate of Mary. Satisfied by the brilliant aspect of the present, she appeared to rest contented with the idea that Heaven, in compensation for all the long anguish of her own life, had decreed to Mary a lot more blessed than that of common mortals.

It was summer, and Marston Hall and the park wore their best aspect. The huge old hall, with its tall Gothic casements, the saloons with their great bay-windows filled continually

with light, seemed temples dedicated to cheerfulness and sunshine; the gardens, the conservatories, were in full bloom and blossom; the magnificent trees bore their richest crowns of foliage; the waters of the fountains were, in the sunlight, as molten gold—beneath the pure beams of the moon, as liquid silver.

Gathered in one of the great bay-windows we sat one evening—a merry party. It was one of the quiet evenings following a day of wild excitement; none but the parties staying in the house were there. A grand picnic and *déjeuner* had been given in the morning; to-morrow was to bring a large dinner-party and ball, and this evening was devoted to repose.

Marston had ridden over to Stanwell after the departure of the *déjeuner* guests; business of importance called him there; and we,

uncertain of the time of his return, and *costumés* for dinner, awaited his arrival in the bay-window of the drawing-room.

The broad glory of the sun, now declining, poured in upon us as in close semicircle we sat watching the changing beauty of the heavens, the rose tints gathering for sunset, the shadows deepening upon the verdant lawns, the streams of light which, between the huge mossy trunks of the mighty trees, were shed across the more distant forest glades.

It was a noble prospect! First the eye fell upon the unrivalled terrace-walk, with its gay borders of choice flowers; then we looked down the flight of marble steps into the beautiful garden, in the centre of which the fountains lung into the scented air their treasure of bright waters; then, beyond that garden with

its fountains, its statues, its marble urns, its conservatories and greenhouses, its rare plants, its wealth of sweet flowers and gorgeous blossoms, its rock-hewn basins glittering with golden fishes, its aviaries tenanted with bright-hued birds, lay the wide-spreading park.

On this occasion, the exceeding glory of the day added beauty to the beautiful: everything looked lovelier than ordinarily. The rich masses of foliage were so vivid in their bright greens, so dark with their deep shadows; the river, stealing through that sunshine and that gloom, revealed itself in so many picturesque effects—now hidden, now seen, now lost amid thick copsewood, now broad and flowing through level meadow-lands, mirroring the rose tints and the golden sunset lustre of the sky.

Without, Nature indeed wore her robe of pride; within, Art had lavished all her stores. Pictures, marbles, splendid furniture, arranged with the most exquisite taste—everything that luxury could wish for, or money could procure, decorated these apartments; and all bestowed with so true a perception, that the most fastidious of fault-finders could have discovered nothing to amend; nay, even our editor, if he had had the “work” to review, would have been forced, *malgré lui*, to give a favourable opinion upon it.

This evening, seated within that gorgeous room, gazing forth upon that magnificent prospect, and feeling that all this was Mary’s, I, at the same time, felt that she was indeed “fortunate;” I, too, had had my misgivings, but they seemed, like Lady Norton’s, to vanish

before the certain knowledge of her present welfare, and before her own undeniably increased brilliancy both of spirits and of charms.

Mary, so fair as a girl, had expanded into a supremely lovely woman. I had not seen her for some time before her confinement, and I was most struck with the change in her appearance produced during the interval. She was now as beautiful as her mother had been, and very like what *she* was once. Her tall figure had gained a certain dignity, the fair proportions had acquired a roundness, a fullness, which was all that was wanted before; and the face, so perfect, save for the lack of high expression, was now redolent with sweet meaning, as she looked alternately at the admiring circle of affectionate friends and

relatives assembled to do her honour, and at her little girl, whose laughing blue eyes and golden tresses were transcripts of her own.

Never, methought, had I seen one so lovely. For a moment I forgot Caroline as I gazed entranced upon this beautiful creature. Then I remembered Caroline—remembered her only to sigh at the contrast the two presented ; for, from Caroline, the hope, the enjoyment, that makes youth so charming, seemed gone for ever ; while, with Mary, each hour appeared to bring richer roses to her cheek, new lustre to the deep azure of her eyes.

All this time, while I was watching the prospect, and thinking about Mary and Caroline, these two individuals, unconscious of what was running in my head, were looking as lovely as they possibly could. Mary was engaged in

passing to and fro, in and out of the circle, playing with her child; and Caroline, sad and abstracted, was gazing forth from the bay-window; and though her dark eyes appeared to be watching intently the graceful movements of a herd of deer just opposite the house, yet from the expression upon her face, it was very evident her thoughts were far away, and she recked little of the fond interest with which I thought of her, or of the yet fonder and deeper feeling which at the moment filled with such unseasonable mournfulness the fine countenance of William Desborough, for he, too, was gazing on her.

But, in spite of the sadness on the brow of Caroline, and on that countenance whose expression was ever the reflex of her own, our party was extremely gay; every one

else appeared quite pleased with themselves and with each other. Lady Norton looked cheerful, Lady Desborough and Mrs. Marston proudly happy; Fanny and Tom Wilmot, side by side, at the farthest end of the semicircle, engaged in a whispering conversation, appeared supremely blessed in each other's society; Sir Edward and Julia were as usual, calm, quiet, and contented; Mary and her child were in high spirits; Marmaduke Lincoln was following every movement of theirs with a glance of affectionate delight; the Broughtons, the Wilmots *père et mère*, her Grace of Brownlow, and others, were employed either in warding off the "anecdotes" of Hamilton, or in listening to Miss Clapham's continued flow of gossip; Harrison and Brunton, who had arrived that morn-

ing, were interspersed among the group in becoming attitudes; Lawrence, our grim editor, was regarding them with a sort of savage pleasure, evidently he was employed in a mental criticism of the performances of these twain of "leading novelists of the day," more severe than he would have considered it expedient to bestow upon them in his periodical. The attitude selected by Harrison was one of mild meditation; his face slightly averted from the telltale glare of day, his glance directed downwards; by this judicious management the light was allowed to fall becomingly upon the most cherished of his "love-locks," and Harrison knew well enough that the eyes were the worst feature in his really handsome countenance.

Brunton, placed directly opposite the light,

thought it a good opportunity to assume an "upward" and poetic look, as though his spirit were draining inspiration from the rays of the bright luminary shedding such warm beams directly upon his high forehead and long nose; accordingly, he kept his gaze directed as nearly as he could towards the sun, and was rewarded for his somewhat painful efforts by hearing Miss Clapham whisper to Mr. Wilmot, "Look, dear Mr. Wilmot, look at Mr. Brunton; I am sure he is composing."

"Janey," said Mary, addressing her child—"Janey, I think we make too much noise for this sedate company. There is cousin John looks as though he thought me more of a baby than you. Let us sit down and be quiet until papa comes home." And she sat down between "cousin John" and Marmaduke Lincoln.

The light streamed full upon her splendid face and figure, and upon the glory of her golden hair. *She* had no need to dread the "telltale sunshine."

"It is a happiness to me, dear Mary," I said, "to see you so happy. You have no truer well-wisher, dear girl, than cousin John."

"Thank you, John, thank you; I believe it; you have always been so kind to me—so, indeed, has every one. I am indeed very happy—very, *very* happy, and every day seems to bring some new source of delight. How merry we have all been to-day, how merry we shall all be to-morrow, and how much pleasure remains for us to share! It seems that life will be too short for the enjoyment of all that the world presents us."

"Dear Mary," interposed Caroline, roused

from her reverie by these last words, "I think there is more sorrow than happiness in the world, and I fancy most others will agree with me in this."

"Not altogether, Miss Desborough," remarked Lincoln. "The world is a beautiful world, full of all the means of happiness, made for enjoyment; and if there is much of sadness and suffering in it, as I deny not, it is born of the sin of man."

"It *is* a beautiful world," sighed Caroline; "but how sadly is its beauty marred! how stained with crime—how peopled with suffering—how darkened by death!"

"Ah!" replied Marmaduke; "but even that death, the lot of all, rightly reflected upon, what is it but the passage to a yet brighter existence, a yet more beautiful world,

through a resurrection of which our nightly slumbers and our morning wakings are but the type and earnest?"

Caroline smiled faintly as she shook her head in reply.—

"But it is so difficult to rise above the sorrows and the disappointments of this world, even while sure that there is another to which we are bound. The heart is so life-loving; it clings so pertinaciously to the objects of its erring affections. Weak, miserable mortals, bound to mortals as weak and miserable by ties whose strength is great in proportion to this weakness, cannot cast off the enthrallment of those ties, of which the very rapture and the happiness are so fearful, so agitated, so uncertain, yet, from these very causes, are so dear. Alas! passing through the valley of

life, it is impossible not to feel the thorns that pierce the foot, even though the eyes are raised with fervent faith unto the light above."

"But," said Lincoln, "where that fervent faith exists there must be hope, and with hope is always joy."

"You are so hopeful yourself, Mr. Lincoln," said Caroline in a livelier tone; "all things with you are full of hope and joy. You can never yet have known any real sorrow. Fortunately for yourself, you speak theoretically."

"Indeed, Miss Desborough, I have not been so free from human griefs as you suppose. I have suffered. I am an orphan, as you know, and I have lost friends. Yes, I can speak practically of grief."

"Ah! but these natural griefs, according to

our nature, cannot last long. Occupation, new ties, these are at hand to solace us; but the heart's blight, the sorrow which bears with it remorse, or at least repentance and regret, does not so easily lose its sway."

"Remorse, Miss Desborough, must be lifelong, but regret fades away like the rest, and sincere repentance soon brings peace of mind. There is no grief which cannot be overcome, where the heart will rouse itself to the task; there is no sin which may not be forgiven, no conscience which cannot find rest."

"You speak proudly, Mr. Lincoln. May you never find, from sad experience, how vain is pride, how feeble are all our efforts, nay, how weak is even prayer, to overcome some sorrows, or to hush some self-accusings!"

Her beautiful face was full of sadness as she

spoke, her dark eyes were filled with tears, her lip trembled, and the colour on her cheek now deepened to a crimson flush, now faded to a mortal paleness. She paused, for her heart seemed full. Marmaduke gazed at her with astonishment; his countenance expressed a deep pity, mingled with a profound admiration.

She met his look and smiled.

"Now I daresay you think me a very, *very* romantic young lady; but you know I am privileged to be a little in the heroics if I please."

"You are privileged, I am sure, to be anything you please," gallantly replied Lincoln; and then both he and Caroline laughed heartily, for Caroline's last speech had quite done

away with the gloomy thoughts she had excited during the course of their conversation.

Do not think that the whole party were mute auditors of this conversation. It was unheard, save by myself, William, and part of it by Mary.

“ Well, really, Caroline, you are the most melancholy girl!” she exclaimed. “ To hear you talk is enough to make one cry, I declare. I *shall* cry unless some one says something cheerful. Pray, cousin John, say something lively.”

“ It is a pity, Mary,” I replied, “ that you do not engage Lord Eaton for your private moralist. He is so fond of treating his friends to grave reflections, yet he always clothes them in language which produces effects the

very reverse of grave. The other day he was moralising on the death of a little girl, the child of his niece Lady Brandon; and he said it was always so melancholy when innocent little creatures, such as she was, were taken off in the flower of their youth; and added, 'The same reflection always occurs to me when I am eating lamb!'

A general laugh followed this "anecdote," with, "Oh, pray let us have another story, cousin John," from both Mary and Fanny at once.

"I do not think I recollect anything else at present," I replied, "unless it is that at desert last autumn at Stanwell I remember hearing him say, in allusion to some passing event, 'Ah! everything has its drawbacks—even medlars have stones!'"

Every one laughed again, and Hamilton, turning towards Mary, began,—

“ Since you are fond of these little anecdotes, madam, I think I can furnish you with one, which, if not altogether so amusing as Mr. Greville’s, still will not, I trust, be found wanting in interest. It was, I think, last January—no, it must have been last June; and yet, when I come to reflect, it could not have been either of those months, but it was some time last year—I met Lord Eaton at some place in Norfolk; I cannot be very sure where, for I was on a round of visits at the time, and I cannot be quite certain whether it was at Sir Beauchamp Proctor’s, or at Lord Wodehouse’s, or at Sir Edward Bacon’s, but I know it was somewhere; and he said——”

“ I know what he said—I remember now,”

interposed Miss Clapham, with much vivacity; he said—‘ Well, perhaps the most melancholy time in the whole year, when we are most reminded of the shortness of all sublunary joys, is when salmon goes out.’ ”

Miss Clapham spoke so quickly it was impossible for Hamilton to stop her. He sat, looking very much annoyed, while every one round was convulsed with ill-concealed laughter at the sight of his discomfiture. But politeness rendered each very anxious that poor Hamilton should not divine the true cause of the merriment, so every voice was raised at once in admiration of the “anecdote,” and in thanks to Mr. Hamilton—“ Oh, what an amusing incident!” from one; “ How delightful!” from another; “ Such a

charming anecdote!" from a third; "So wittily told!" from a fourth; and "Thank you, dear Mr. Hamilton; you always have such a store of entertaining anecdotes, and you tell them so well, thank you, thank you!" from all; until at last Hamilton became quite reconciled to his fate and to Miss Clapham, and almost deluded by these flattering speeches into the belief that he himself had finished his "anecdote," instead of its having been wrested from him by mere volubility of tongue.

Encouraged by such symptoms of admiration manifested for his last attempt, he seemed inclined to inflict upon us another "prose narration," when Miss Clapham, perceiving his intent, turned quickly round upon me, and demanded—

"Pray, Mr. Greville, have you read the 'New Spirit of the Age?'"

To use a popular phrase, "tremendous excitement" instantly prevailed in the circle. To begin with, every one was astonished at such a question from a lady who was supposed to talk too fast to have time to read, and it was, besides, a very *mal à propos* question, for neither Harrison nor Brunton had been civilly treated in the said publication.

"And what, Miss Clapham," I demanded—"what in the world can make you take any interest in such a book as that?"

"Oh, don't suppose that I have read it," she returned; "I have no leisure for anything of the sort: but I found my maid reading it the other morning, and she informed me that her

sweetheart, John, the hairdresser, had lent it to her, telling her she would find it very useful, as it said a great deal about books and authors, which did very well to talk about, and gave people the idea of one's being a great reader and a learned critic."

Most of us were amused by the hairdresser's recommendation; but Harrison remarked sharply that "he thought the book very well suited to the class of readers Miss Clapham had represented as being engaged upon it."

"I cannot condemn the work so utterly," observed Lincoln. "I think it makes some very fair hits, and says some very true things."

"It is almost impossible for a man to write so much without saying something that is

true," replied Lawrence. "This book is but just come out, and in three weeks it will be as much forgotten as though it had never been——"

"Except by those it castigates," slyly remarked Fanny, in an under tone.

"It displays," rejoined Lawrence, "such an extraordinary amount of personal vanity and self-conceit, so much pretension; the talents of the author are overlooked and forgotten in the disgust one feels for his vanity. The vanity of the mediocre writers of the present day is quite unsurpassable. Every tenth man writes, and the other nine form a little admiring group around him, and praise and adulate until he believes himself one of those who form the 'spirit of the age,' fit for anything, and forthwith rushes into all kinds of absurdities,

"The 'spirit of the age,' indeed!" he continued. "How few can fathom or define it! What right has this 'little unknown' to obtrude his private opinions upon the world as so many great truths to be accepted humbly as accurate definitions of the 'spirit of the age'?"

"But Hazlitt has already written a book of that title, has he not?" inquired Mary.

"He did write a book of that title," answered Lawrence, "about twenty years ago; and this new Mr. H. thinks that a new one is now required."

"Hazlitt unquestionably had talent," I observed.

"Undoubtedly," answered Lawrence; "but so smothered by self-conceit, so mingled with that intolerable bad taste which has made the

'cockney school' so ridiculous, and, I regret to add, so hidden under a crust of natural vulgarity, that he might almost just as well not have had it.

"When I use the word 'vulgarity,'" continued Lawrence, after a moment's pause, "I do not speak of him personally: I never knew him. He might have been a second Chesterfield for aught I know. But I mean that vulgarity of mind which will proclaim itself, and which, even in his best writings, is too often made manifest. But he had talent—strong natural talent; so have several of those cockneys: I even acknowledge its presence in the writings of Mr. Huntley."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lady Desborough, with a look in which extreme surprise was mingled with contempt.

"Yes," answered Lawrence, "I do: not genius, but a fair proportion of talent, and a lively fancy, which sometimes gives birth to a pretty idea; and, had that talent and that fancy occupied another sphere, or been exercised under different circumstances, he might have been a much more pleasing writer; as it is, his works are sadly injured by bad taste, which shows itself in affected simplicity, perversion of the English language, the coinage of new words or revival of old ones, and a thousand other absurdities."

"For my part," said Lincoln, "I always feel a sort of pity for the class of men of which you speak. It is always painful to behold even moderate gifts abused."

"It is, Mr. Lincoln," observed Lawrence. "How much better would it be if men, with

moderate talent, moderate education, and the wish to write, would follow in the steps of many other men of similar pretensions, who gain a decent livelihood by their pens, and yet are never heard of beyond their own immediate circle. But, instead of so contenting themselves, they contrive to become conspicuous, not celebrated, by cutting the most fantastic capers possible."

"And pray," I demanded, "do you perceive the same vulgarity in the writings of Mr. Huntley as you find in the productions of others of the school?"

"I am sorry to say I do," answered Lawrence, but with very little sorrow either in his look or voice. "Only the other day I was reading in a monthly periodical some light production of his, with a heroine whose name was Maria ;

and I distinctly recollect one sentence, in which Maria, who is of course much attached to her husband, is represented, on an occasion on which they are together at a dinner given by some friends, to manifest her affection rather oddly: the sentence ran thus:—‘While Maria gathered her husband’s feet between her own, pressing them together beneath the table;’ meant, of course, as a proof of love.

“Now, can you imagine,” continued Lawrence, turning towards the listening group with a look of innocent wonder — “can you imagine a more horribly rude mode of expressing affection? Do you think it was ever heard of in any society? Do you think such a practice ever existed, except in the brain of the author?”

An expression of surprise pervaded the

listeners at this description of the manners of Maria, given in the words of her own biographer, and then the conversation flew to another topic.

“Are you an admirer of Keats, Mr. Lawrence?” demanded Marmaduke. “I believe he is considered as the head of the cockney school?”

“He certainly did a great deal of harm among them,” replied Lawrence. “He has had as many imitators as Byron, and done far more general mischief; for to imitate Byron was at least to follow in the track of a true poet, whose pure verse was distorted by no affectations; but the result of imitating Keats was that his admirers made themselves excessively ridiculous, for none brought to the attempt one hundredth part of

the genius which, apparent through all his productions, however fantastic, almost compensated for his numberless faults.

“ His genius was splendid ; and had he been spared until his mind arrived at its maturity, and his taste improved, he would have been an honour to his age and country. The poems he has left show what those of his matured intellect would have been ; although disfigured by puerile conceits, and in some instances rendered odious by their immorality, they yet contain all the materials of poetry in the highest degree. Even as it is, how beautiful are some of his smaller pieces ! You all remember his lines to a nightingale, and those to a Grecian urn—what can be more beautiful ? And there are splendid passages in his ‘ Endymion.’ He pos-

essed, in his mind, all the true elements of a poet."

"But how inferior to Shelley!" exclaimed Caroline. "Oh, how inferior to Shelley!"

"Inferior, doubtless, in one sense: what he has produced is inferior to what the lamented Shelley has left us; but had both been spared, I doubt not Keats would have distanced all competitors.

"And poor Shelley!" resumed our editor, who found himself listened to, and therefore was in no humour to stop. "Poor Shelley! What a gift was his, and what a fate he met with! What can exceed the beauty of his compositions? Each period is a strain of sweet music; each sentence is in itself a finished picture.

"What a pity that his own wish before his

death could not be put in execution—that of recalling and destroying those of his earlier publications, the tenets of whose vile atheism remain a blot upon his name! but the singular bad taste of his last biographer and editor has rather revived and brought to light these obnoxious poems and passages, instead of hurrying them to the obscurity in which they must sink at last. Nay, the same perversion of all proper feeling has caused a note, which had before been suppressed, again to be replaced in its old position. I am not sure, however, whether it has been allowed to remain—it was blasphemous in the extreme. Had Shelley lived, that restitution would never have taken place.”

“ I am told the language of his prose essays is beautiful ?” I inquired.

"It is so; but he was a master of language. Oh, how entrancing, how delicious are some of his verses! Is not the 'Ode to the Skylark' a piece of genuine inspiration? What can be more perfect than his lines on the 'Medusa'?"

"Ah!" rejoined Caroline, "and what can equal some of the passages in 'Alastor, the Spirit of Solitude'?" And she repeated with infinite feeling those beautiful lines:—

"There was a poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence rear'd,
But the charm'd eddies of autumnal winds
Heap'd o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness.
A lovely youth! no mourning maiden deck'd
With votive flowers or weeping cyprus-wreath
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep.
Gentle! and brave! and generous! no lorn bard
Breath'd o'er his sad fate one melodious sigh;
He liv'd, he died, he sang in solitude.

Tyrants have wept to hear those passionate strains;
And maidens, as unknown he pass'd, have pin'd
And wasted for fond love of those wild eyes.
The fire of those bright orbs has ceas'd to burn;
And silence, too enamour'd of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell."

Tears stood in some bright eyes as she concluded these touching lines, to which her sweet voice seemed to impart a double power of pathos; but Fanny broke the silence that followed by exclaiming, "A very different spirit that from the 'Spirit of the Age'!"

"Dear me!" said Miss Clapham; "we had quite forgotten the poor 'Spirit of the Age;' and I remember, Mr. Greville, I asked you what you thought of it, and I do not think you ever gave me an answer."

"Why, really, Miss Clapham, such things are not much in my way; but if you posi-

tively will know what I think upon the subject, I will explain my sentiments to you as well as I can. It is my opinion," I continued, "that these gentlemen who write upon the 'spirit of the age' make one grand mistake; they stoop too low. The 'spirit of the age' is not governed, or even influenced, by the petty efforts of the men of the day. In the course of each generation, a few bright intellects are produced, which lead, command, colour, all meaner minds, and all efforts of these. Long ages pass, and these spirits yet remain—fixed stars in the firmament to which they soared at once; and from time to time another is added to that glorious galaxy; but, meantime, scores of 'little great men,' the idols of an hour, rise into short-lived celebrity. For a moment they flutter on the fickle wings

of popularity, above the heads of the gaping multitude; then fall, to be for ever forgotten, trodden under foot by crowds which run to hail the advent of some new competitor for 'pence and fame.' These men, during their career, have their class of admirers, and, if their productions are profitable, they have their imitators; but there it ends. How absurd then to write a book gravely discussing the merits and demerits of this species, as influencing the 'spirit of the age'! A writer of the day has said that the 'spirit of the age' is that concurrence of men's minds which, irresistible in its course, desires, imagines, wants, and then creates and obtains. If such is a good definition of the term, we must seek the spirit of the age in its grand results. One age has produced the greatest statesmen, another the greatest

warriors, according as these were required; and the remote causes that influenced both the want, the creation, and the attainment, may doubtless be connected with one species of popular literature, but not with all the thousand-and-one novels that appear and pass away, most innocent of any effect, save that sometimes of a very calming and soporific one. What, in the name of all the Muses, have these to do with the spirit of the age?"

"I should say," interposed Lawrence, "that if the spirit of this age, speaking upon an extended scale, has any particular bent for requiring and creating, it is for despots; witness Louis-Philippe, and the Emperor of Russia, and Mehemet Ali. Or, if we look to more minute evidences for the spirit of the

age, we must conclude it exhibits itself in the longing for 'something new.'

"A contemptible longing enough," I said, "which leads men into crimes and follies innumerable for the sake of making themselves conspicuous by striking out 'something new;' and surely the present ravings of some who, among other freaks, would revive the practice of idolatry, are proofs how vanity can mislead or zeal can blind those who, we are bound to believe, act from no wicked motive, however apparent the weakness of their conduct may be. But do not let us follow this subject any further; but tell me whether my observation is not correct when I say that it is absurd to discuss gravely the merits or demerits of most of the writers of

whose performances the author of the 'New Spirit of the Age' treats?"

Glancing around me as I concluded this sentence, I encountered a very doubtful expression on the faces of Harrison and Brunton. Could I mean to include them in the category of "little great men"? This question, written in doleful characters, was visible upon their showy countenances. At last Brunton began.—

"But these men of whom you speak, sir—the writers for *the people*, the daily leaders or interpreters of the great voice of public opinion—these *are* the 'spirit of the age;' they constitute it in themselves."

"I do not agree with you, Brunton," said Lawrence. "Greville is right. These men



take their tone from some great leader, but they will sink into oblivion when their efforts cease; whereas the master-spirits who directed their course, from whom they took their tone, and, consequently, to whom they owed their transient popularity, live in the record of fame, for good or evil, for ever."

The cloud on the two showy countenances cleared away. Harrison and Brunton thought it possible that they might be considered as "master-spirits."

"This age," continued Lawrence, "is essentially not an age of poetry. Its cleverest men are politicians; its wittiest writer was a politician; and people now-a-days say they cannot afford to buy books; so all read newspapers, and subscribe to circulating libraries

for the 'novels of the day.' The sweetest poet that ever sang might raise his voice in vain to obtain a hearing."

But there was another "literary character" in the group who did not feel satisfied with the generalities of the critic. This was Mrs. Duff. She had been sitting on thorns for the last half-hour, unable to get a word in: she now commenced her attack.

"But surely, Mr. Lawrence, you do not condemn all writers of the present day to utter oblivion?"

"Indeed, madam, with a very few bright exceptions, I think such will be their fate. Of all the numerous names that have graced the title-pages of fictitious works since the beginning of this century, there are few that will survive until the commencement of the

next. Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, Southey, Shelley—these and a few others appear to me alone to lay any just claim to immortality.”

“ You do acknowledge a few besides the names you mention ?” nervously inquired Mrs. Duff.

“ A few,” repeated Lawrence. “ And, indeed, madam, it is scarcely necessary for you to ask that question.” And Lawrence, bowing gallantly to the lady, did not fail to look, at the same time, towards Harrison and Brunton, with an expression that seemed to imply that he wished them to consider themselves included in the indirect compliment he had paid Mrs. Duff.

The three literati thus put in good humour, the conversation flowed rapidly. Harrison and Brunton, feeling assured that they were ex-

empted from the editor's sweeping condemnation, began to take pleasure in listening to, and assenting with, the castigations bestowed upon their absent brethren. The same feeling actuated Mrs. Duff; while Lady Desborough, who had appeared a little uneasy during part of the foregoing conversation, fearful perhaps that Lawrence should say something too palpable, and thereby give pain to her pet lions, was quite placed at her ease by the effect produced by his pretty speech.

"You are really the most hardhearted man I know," exclaimed Fanny, addressing Lawrence; "you will allow no one any merit. Only consider what a long list of distinguished names you are consigning to forgetfulness by your sweeping clauses." And Fanny commenced enumerating a long string of authors.

In the midst of this Lawrence stopped her as she pronounced the name of Crabbe.

“ Yes, indeed, Miss Random, you are right there. Crabbe will long have readers and admirers. Never was there a writer more true to nature, or one gifted with a greater power of pathos. His descriptions, also, how faithful! and his depictures of the agonies of a guilty conscience are unsurpassed in the English language. There is something terrible in the way in which he bares before his reader the fearful workings of the heart of crime or of remorse. The last edition of his poems is very interesting; containing, as it does, the original passages of each poem, with the corrections they received before going to press. His ‘Life’ is also written in an entertaining manner, but I confess I had rather not have read that ‘Life.’ ”

"And wherefore?" I inquired.

"It rather lowers the idea I had formed of his character. Not the first part, but the latter, in his most prosperous days; and especially where allusions are introduced touching his septuagenarian love-affairs. I confess I had rather not have read it. But this, perhaps, is but a foolish fancy of mine; and his biography proves him throughout to have been an excellent man."

"And," exclaimed Fanny, triumphantly, "I have another immortal ready for you, Mr. Lawrence. What do you say to Professor Watson?"

"Why, that I consider him a delightful writer, wonderful in description, and unequalled in a peculiar and most captivating species of criticism; but his tales, his works of pure

fiction, I do not think are of a class to command general attention, or to become standard works; they are of too painful a nature. His characters bear such loads of misery, go through such trials; the feeling remaining after their perusal is so extremely painful a one. These are reasons against his ever becoming a general favourite. Crabbe's horrors have their bright relief, but his have none.

"But certainly," he continued, "few men of our day or any other are to be ranked with the Professor: there have been few minds so fine, few intellects so powerful; and, had he put forth his poems at any other time, he would have held a high place among poets. The dazzling genius of Byron was then in its ascendant; Scott, Wordsworth, Campbell, Rogers, Moore, were all chanting sweet strains;

and it is not to be much wondered at that a scarcely inferior bard should have sung almost unheard. There are many beautiful passages in his poems ; one especially, in the ‘ Isle of Palma,’ dwells on the ear like music.” And Lawrence repeated, with much taste and feeling, the lines commencing—

“ Lo ! higher still the stately palm-trees rise.”

When he had concluded, a slight pause ensued, which was broken by Caroline remarking,—

“ Surely this age has already produced a host of superior minds. What numbers of clever works have appeared within the last half-century ! what a strength of talent must be in daily employ to render the almost numberless crowd of newspapers, magazines, and periodicals of every description, readable !”

“Your remark is a just one, Miss Desborough; and those who *read* now are so much better informed and educated than was the case in the last generation. The average of periodical literature does rank very high; but this age, remarkable for the general spread of education, and for the increase of all kinds of intellectual efforts, as well as of the capabilities of appreciating and understanding them, is also remarkable for the impartiality with which such gifts are bestowed. All men now-a-days — ay, and all women too—have some pretensions, either as authors or critics; but few, very few, are gifted to rise above the crowd; and some, who might have earned a name had they turned their talents to a good account, shone for a brief space, and are now forgotten, save by a

few who remember them but to mourn over perverted talents and misdirected energies. Witness Godwin, whose powers were so great, that he might have raised for himself an everlasting pyramid of fame, yet has he left but a poor and fading monument."

"By the by," inquired Brunton, "do you know anything of Trevalyon, who took so conspicuous a part at Godwin's funeral?"

"Trevalyon!" exclaimed Lady Desborough, "whom Mrs. Newton used to call her 'pet wolf,' or her 'tame wolf,' or some such name?"

"The same; he is a great friend of Leeds, the M.P., and is continually at his house when he is in England. Yes, I know him."

"Every one does to a certain extent, from the share he took in poor Shelley's strange

obsequies, and from his acquaintance with Byron; he is a singular character."

"Not a very estimable one, I fear. I have heard many strange tales of his conduct in the east, where he was master of a small vessel, which, well manned and armed, performed various very questionable exploits in the Grecian seas. His love-affairs also, of which he has had an infinity, show great heartlessness. I know a sad story relating to his conduct towards the beautiful daughter of an Albanian chief. At the very best, he is a daring freethinker, to call him by no harsher name. Have you read his novel, *Lady Desborough* — 'The Memoirs of an Elder Brother'?"

"No," replied her ladyship, "but I remember William was recommended to read it, and

he told me it was not a book that would interest me—too full of fighting, not a lady's book."

"No; decidedly not a lady's book. I believe it contains a true description of some of his own adventures, and it is really well written. I wonder who got it up for him."

"Do you not think then that he wrote it himself?"

"He may have supplied the materials," answered Lawrence, "but I am sure he did not write the book. I have seen many notes and letters of his, and in the course of half a dozen lines you are sure to meet with as many mistakes in grammar or in orthography."

"Really! Is he then a person of no education?"

"He is a man of good family and connexion, and, I should not doubt, of good education also; but some people may stay at school all their lives, and yet would never spell, and perhaps he may be one of those geniuses. I do not think him a man of talent; but circumstances threw him in the company of Byron; and there is thenceforth associated a degree of interest with his name; and very proud he is of it, and very strenuously does he endeavour to maintain his somewhat doubtful character of 'lion.'"

"Pray, in what way does he make himself conspicuous?" inquired Fanny, who had never seen him.

"Oh, 'his rôle is that of the intellectual, interesting ruffian—the Corsair, in fact; and

his manners, appearance, and studied costume concur very much in producing the effect he wishes. He also affects all kinds of eccentricities, on the principle that, because genius is often eccentric, eccentric people must be geniuses."

"A common mistake," laughed Branton.

"I remember," said Tom Wilmot, "meeting him once at Brighton, and seeing him play off many little airs. He used to pace up and down in the twilight, and especially in very stormy weather, near the sea, with his cloak thrown around him in most picturesque fashion, and his dark brow and black rolling eyes glooming above it, with an aspect stern enough for ten Corsairs. By the by, speaking of his cloak, there were all kinds of tales connected with it; and he would some-

122 THE HENDERSONS FAMILY.

"THEY ARE IN THE SITUATION I had stated, and
WILL NOT BE IN THE LIGHT TO exhibit
IN THE COURT WITH WHICH I should."

"THEY ARE" exclaimed every lady in
the room, with varying accents of horror and
indignation.

"So called by himself," answered Tom. "I
cannot think, however, for the real origin
of the late most meetings, which might
not have reached in such I know."

"Are you acquainted with him?" inquired
Mary. It was said in a half whisper, addressing Tom.

"Yes, sir," he replied. "I was stay-
ing there with the Brandings, to whom he
received notice of introduction, which he de-
livered himself, and received in return an
immediate invitation to dinner. At first he
hesitated, as though about to decline, but

after a time he consented to come and dine with us the next day (that day we were engaged) at six o'clock, quite *en famille*. Not a creature was to be asked to meet him; this he stipulated most particularly. 'He had a great dislike,' he said, 'to being made the staring-point of a large company.'

"Accordingly, no one was invited, and at the appointed hour next day in strode Trevalyon, dressed in a *blue frock*. Dinner passed off very well. Trevalyon was in rather a lionish mood, but the Brandlings are lively people, and the chattering and unaffected talking that was kept up at last thawed his assumed reserve and abstractedness. Trevalyon became talkative and entertaining.

"Dinner over, the ladies adjourned, and

shortly afterwards we joined them in the drawing-room. There we found a slight addition to the party, in the shape of an old gentleman and his wife, who resided next door, and were in the habit of coming in every evening to make up a rubber with Mr. and Mrs. Brandling; and now commenced the troubles of the day. Trevalyon began to show symptoms of savageness; the treaty had been infringed upon; strangers had been invited to meet him. Although secretly pleased at what he considered an act of homage on the part of the said strangers (for he attributed their coming to curiosity), he yet thought it right to appear as though he believed himself an injured individual. His demeanour became sullen, or rather sulky; he sat in silence and apparent abstractedness for some

minutes; then, as if a bright idea, too good to be lost, had suddenly struck him, he drew a pencil from his pocket, commenced writing on the back of a letter; as suddenly stopped, and, starting up, without a word of farewell to his kind host and hostess or their amiable daughters, he strode across the apartment and vanished; nor, I believe, have any of them seen him since that moment, for he went to town next day, and certainly did not call before his departure; and this sample of the 'eccentricities of genius' I was myself witness to."

"And so Trevalyon can't spell!" chimed in Anecdote Hamilton, as the laugh which this historiette excited subsided. "And so Trevalyon cannot spell! Well, other great men have been deficient in that respect. Spelling seems

to be a gift like other higher qualities. One sees some boys at school who never have occasion to look over their spelling-lesson, others who may look over it for half the day, yet will contrive to make plentiful mistakes in the end."

"Now, Mr. Hamilton," exclaimed Miss Clapham, "I know you are going to tell your new anecdotes about Jackson, the American president. I am sure of it. I heard you tell them the other day; and very good anecdotes they were."

"And pray, Miss Clapham," growled Hamilton, "how could you know I was going to relate those anecdotes?"

"Because, when you told them before, the preamble was precisely the same as the sentence you have just given us."

"Really, Miss Clapham," interposed Mary—"really you are too bad. Poor Mr. Hamilton is never permitted now to entertain us with his delightful anecdotes. You are always nipping them in the bud. Now, pray, Mr. Hamilton, do not mind Miss Clapham, but tell *me* the anecdotes about Jackson."

Mary did not like to see poor Hamilton so openly snubbed. Miss Clapham was, indeed, "too bad;" she was backed by her grace, who did not care what lengths she went, provided she could smother an anecdote. Mary's good-nature was rewarded by the relation of the following little incidents:—

"Jackson, madam," he began, "surnamed Old Hickory, I conclude from some corresponding quality of toughness between his character and that of the tough hickory-plant, was, at

the time of which I speak, President of the United States. On the occasion of some accounts connected with his office being offered to him for his inspection, he signified his proval and approval of their integrity by affixing to the documents the letters 'O. K.,' signifying 'All correct.' *

Hamilton received great applause for this "anecdote," it was so well and so briefly told for *him*, and it was new to the majority of the company; even her grace was pleased to manifest the pleasure she received, for once, by listening to Anecdote Hamilton. Mary repaid him amply by asking—

"And have you not another of these stories for us?"

"I have," he replied, greatly elated; "and

* Fact.

also about Old Hickory." And he continued thus:—"At the conclusion of some debate at which he presided, he, after a few words of explanation upon some subject, cut matters short by facetiously exclaiming, 'N. S. M. G.' Now, what do you think those characters express?"

No one could guess. Hamilton was entreated to unravel the mystery.

"N. S. M. G.," he repeated: "*Enough said among gentlemen.*"*

This story was considered almost as good as the first; and more were called for, but more were not forthcoming. Hamilton had no others on that subject, and his attempts to introduce an *à propos* were smothered in their cradles.

* Fact.

The spirit of criticism was strong upon Lawrence in that hour ; and he waited impatiently until he could return to his "cuttings up."

"Talking of America," he commenced, "are you an admirer of Cooper?"

He addressed Mrs. Duff, who thought it would look like envy if she did not praise him, so launched forth in terms of due admiration. But Lawrence wanted to promulgate his own opinions, not to listen to those of others ; and upon Harrison, who remarked that he thought Cooper a very unequal writer, turning to Lawrence for confirmation or contradiction of this remark, Lawrence readily broached his ideas upon the subject. He began by praise.

"No writer," he said, "possesses powers of a certain description equal to Cooper. His scar-

scenes are generally unrivalled, and also those relating to life among the woods and with the wild denizens of the mighty forests of his native land. There is also a class of characters which are essentially his own—the ‘Long Tom Coffins,’ the deer-slayers, ‘Leather Stockings,’ ‘Longue Carabines,’ &c. These stand alone, and so far so good; but, as you say, he is very unequal, and he has a thousand faults, not the least of which is his folly in ever quitting those paths he treads so well to explore his way through the high roads of more civilized life, where he shows completely his ignorance of the way by stumbling at every step. Nothing can be more true to nature or more delightful than his descriptions of savages, wild Indians, rough seamen, and such-like; nothing more painful than his attempts

at depicting the manners of ladies and gentlemen, more especially when those ladies and gentlemen are intended for English people; then the caricature strikes us most forcibly."

"What a pity he should ever attempt scenes and characters to which he is so unequal!" observed Caroline.

"It is so," replied Lawrence; "yet what can he do? It is very difficult to make out a novel in three volumes (much less a dozen such) without introducing characters from the upper ranks; nay, I should say it was impossible. But Cooper's young ladies, especially, are a most extraordinary race of beings; they always appear before my mind's eye in the shapes of the damsels that smile behind the counters of the Soho Bazaar. In the 'Spy'—perhaps his best work, certainly

one of his most deeply interesting ones—he makes his heroine, Fanny, bow down her head to bite off the thread from the work upon her knee, as an excuse for concealing her blushing face. What can be a more ungraceful or inelegant proceeding for a heroine? Then his young ladies, always sweet timid creatures of sixteen or eighteen, address young men of their ordinary acquaintance as ‘Smith,’ ‘Brown,’ ‘Thomson,’ &c. As one hears these appellations bounce from the rosy lips of the fair dames, one fancies them heightening the heartiness of the hail by a genial slap on the back or a punch in the ribs.

“Can you imagine, Mr. Hamilton,” continued Lawrence, silyly—“can you image to yourself your meeting Miss Clapham in the Park, or at the Opera, or anywhere else, and,

on going up to pay your devoirs, being received with so affectionate a salutation as, ‘ Well, Hamilton, my good fellow, how are you ? ’ ”

Neither Miss Clapham nor Hamilton, who, as may be supposed, were anything but “ sincerely attached ” to each other, could imagine such a passage betwixt themselves ; and the lady looked almost as though she thought she had a right to be angry, but was checked in the expression of her feelings, whatever they might have been, by Lawrence continuing and concluding his criticism by one of his saving clauses.—

“ But, after all, Cooper is certainly a very powerful writer.”

“ People talk about ‘ powerful writers,’ and ‘ witty writers,’ and once upon a time they talked about ‘ ingenious writers,’ ” said Fanny

Random, "Now, pray, Mr. Lawrence, which would you rather be considered—a powerful writer, a witty writer, or an ingenious writer?"

"Why," replied Lawrence, "really I cannot say I quite know what an ingenious writer is, unless the cockneys are ingenious writers. They certainly display a good deal of ingenuity in the invention of new words, and in finding new meanings for old ones. For myself, *if* I were a critic"—and Lawrence laughed sily as he spoke—"and had one of these under the lash, I should like to be considered a powerful writer; although, in ordinary cases, I should prefer the reputation of a witty writer. But, Miss Random, why do you apply to me on the subject?"

Here are Harrison, and Brunton, and Mrs. Duff; all three both powerful and witty, and, I dare say, ingenious writers: why do you not ask them how they value their several reputations?"

"Because I am afraid they won't tell me. Now you, who always pretend that you have no literary reputation at all, will, I am sure, be very candid in your answers."

"Well, Miss Random, I have been candid; I have said that, except in a particular case, I should prefer being considered a witty writer, as I understand the word 'wit' comprises almost every quality in an author that can please and charm."

"What an indefinable word it is!" exclaimed Caroline. "People who make puns

call themselves 'witty;' yet the most delightful writers that ever put pen to paper can be rewarded with no higher praise."

"Some puns have a great deal of wit in them, Miss Desborough," said Lawrence.

"I suppose I must admit that," answered Caroline; "but I do dislike puns so much, I can hardly be persuaded to allow them any merit."

"They certainly are very low," replied Lawrence, with great gravity of manner, "but sometimes very amusing."

"Oh, they are—they are, indeed!" exclaimed Fanny and Tom Wilmot in one breath. "'Hood's Comic Annual' is my delight," continued Fanny.

"And I am sure," observed Mary, "there

never was so charming a writer as Theodore Hook."

"Ah!" said Caroline, "but you do not class the countless graces, the brilliant equivoques, the delightful playing with words, that sparkle throughout his works, with puns."

"You give a good definition of a witty writer, Miss Desborough," said Lawrence, addressing Caroline; "and Hook is indeed a witty writer. The Reverend Sidney Smith was perhaps the wittiest writer we had. Dillons, who is king of the literary world at present, is not a witty writer, he is rather a powerful writer; but then his extraordinary knowledge of human nature, and his power of depicting character, would make any style of writing fascinating. Mrs. Gough used to be a witty writer, but

writing by the line has spoiled others beside her. Mrs. Turnip is what is called, in the jargon of the day, a powerful writer, that is to say, she often makes one feel sick; yet one cannot help acknowledging her descriptions to be very near the truth."

"She often obliges one to turn to the title-page to convince oneself that the book one is reading is written by a lady," said Hamilton, sternly. "But go on with your list, Mr. Lawrence."

"I do not think there are any left to mention. Yes, there are a few. Jacques is not a witty nor a powerful writer, certainly a correct, perhaps an ingenious one. The Captain is not a witty, he may be a powerful writer; Miss Martineau is an "extremely powerful writer;" Miss Edgeworth is occa-

sionally a witty writer, always an entertaining one. And" (here Lawrence paused, then added), "I do not recollect any more names."

"Do you not, Mr. Lawrence?" said Fanny; "why, there are hundreds more." And again she reiterated a list of "distinguished names."

"Oh, I grant you, Miss Random, there are hundreds of others besides those we were speaking of, and who were distinguished by the usual phraseology; but they come under various denominations. Now, there is Miss Mitford, who is a 'pleasing writer;' and poor L. E. L., who was a 'sweet writer' (remember, I am only speaking of prose works of fiction); and there were Galt and Maginn, who were really 'good writers;' and Miss Austin and Miss Ferrier, who were 'charming writers;'

and Mrs. Shelley, who is an '*esprit fort*;' and there are Lady Blessington, and the Baroness Calabrilla, and the author of '*Violet*,' who is a '*touching writer*;' and the authoress of the '*Old Men's Tales*' is a '*lady of great genius*;' and there is the author of '*Whitefriars*,' who is an '*original writer*;' and the author of '*Foningsby*,' who is a '*knowing writer*;' and many, many besides, whom I could not enumerate without sending you all to sleep. These will suffice, will they not, Miss Random?"

Fanny laughed and thanked him.

I remarked—"Well, Lawrence, you have a good memory indeed. Why, I could not have recollected so many of their names if my life depended on it: but tell me why you

call the author of 'Foningsby' a 'knowing writer'?"

"Because he writes for place, under the garb of an innocent three-volumist; and though that aspiration, I trust, may be long in meeting fulfilment, still he has gained a certain amount of celebrity. It has been the same with 'Foningsby' as it is often with individuals; their pretension dazzles, and their shallowness and utter worthlessness are covered by the glitter; but time always distinguishes the real from the false, and 'Foningsby' has had its day.

"All kinds of odd ideas," continued Lawrence, "come into my head when I think of 'Foningsby'—a boy playing with gunpowder, a sparrow chirping amid a colony of eagles, a

minnow among a lordly shoal of whales, and many other great and little things."

"Some of the delineations are good," I said; "but what a ridiculous class of characters is that represented by his omnipotent and omniscient Jew; rendered yet more ridiculous and disagreeable in this representation, because the wonderful individual is a Jew; it jars so strangely with all received tastes and predilections."

"I think, sir," said Mrs. Duff, with a grim smile, and addressing me, "You do not seem very fond of literature."

"Yes, I am, madam; but perhaps not of all the trash the circulating libraries of the present day pour forth upon a devoted public."

"I believe the 'trash,' as you call it, of

the present day is far superior to what was 'poured forth' on the heads of the past generation," replied the lady.

"It is so, madam," said Lawrence; "but that is not saying much for it."

"Mr. Lawrence mentioned Miss Edgeworth just now," continued Mrs. Duff, still addressing me. "Pray, are you not an admirer of her writings?"

"Yes, I am a very great one as far as they go, but I am not much of a novel-reader; and when I do take one up, I regret to say I find myself such a fastidious mortal, few afford me any pleasure."

"I said," remarked Lawrence, "I thought Miss Edgeworth occasionally a 'witty writer.'"

"You did, and I quite agree with you. Her individual Irish characters are inimitable,

both rich and poor ; she masters every trait, and holds it up to public admiration or contempt, as the case may be ; but in estimating character on a more extended scale, she takes sometimes false views of things ; her standard is too high or too low ; her virtuous heroes and heroines are such models of perfection, her wicked ones such monsters of iniquity. Her estimation of human nature is not exactly a correct one. To me her tale called ' Patronage,' which ranks among the best of her works, loses much of its beauty on this account. In that story, that naughty family the Falconers never do one good act, or think one good thought, throughout the whole volumes ; while the opposing good family (whose names I forget) are perfectly immacu-

late, every member of them, in thought, word, and deed. Now is that natural? I think not quite."

"That has often struck me before," said Lawrence, "and is too often a fault with our novelists, especially ladies; and for that reason I like a tale of Miss Edgeworth's, named 'Vivian,' better than any of her others; it contains more passion, more confession of infirmity, on the part of the favourite characters. Poor Vivian interests one the more for all his faults and frailties; and there is one character in this tale drawn with a master-hand—that of Lady Sarah; it is very true to life."

"I cannot say I am fond of Irish tales and characters generally speaking," observed Lady Desborough. "Some of those old Irish nurses

are the most tiresome creatures in the world—in print I mean—with their ‘darlints’ and ‘graw bawns;’ but about the living specimens of the lower orders of the population of the Emerald Isle with whom I have had any acquaintance I have always recognised a species of native wit as amusing in them as it is rare in the natives of any other country.”

“The power, or rather the gift, of saying witty things impromptu, is rare enough,” observed Harrison; “and the quality varies so in its nature with different individuals. Some have such ready replies, rejoinders, equivoques, their conversation is like a blaze of fireworks; with others the gift is shown by the occasional production of some queer dry remark, the chief charm of which lies in its originality. I have

a friend whose genius takes that direction. I remember one of his sayings that always struck me as involving such a completely original idea. He was staying near the Lakes at the time, and, walking with me through the little town of Keswick, we overtook the public crier crying some 'lost' or 'found' article at the very top of his voice, ringing his bell, and of course making a great noise. P—— went softly up to him, and put his hand upon his shoulder, patting it once or twice gently. Succeeding in arresting the man's attention, he said to him, speaking very low, with accents partly of surprise, partly of gentle remonstrance, 'Hush, hush, my good man! if you don't take care, all the people will hear you.'"

We were all amused ; and Fanny and Mary were extremely anxious that Harrison should remember some more specimens of the wit of this original gentleman.

By this time the sun had sunk so low that the edge of his broad disc just rested upon the dark-blue boundary of the far horizon. Directly opposite the window at which we sat an opening in the deep woods of Marston Hall, formed partly by nature, partly by art, allowed the eye to pierce through their verdant masses even until it rested upon that dark-blue boundary-line ; and all eyes were engaged at that moment in watching the gradual sinking of the orb of day and the departing glories of sunset.

Up this opening, of which I have spoken,

the yet unshorn lustre poured a full blaze of light upon our gay assemblage, making more dazzling the beauty of the beautiful, more bright the brightness of the gems which decked those fair and graceful forms, flashing from the mirrors, adding richness to the rich furniture and ornaments of that magnificent room, gold to the gold, sheen to the satin.

On every face that sun shone upon smiles were dimpling. It seemed to crown each brow with a halo of happiness and glory; even as it touched the perfect profile of Caroline, it appeared to illuminate it with an expression of contentment, almost of joyousness; amid the golden curls of Mary, it was as a diadem of light.

Mary and her child were nearly in the

centre, and its greatest strength and brilliancy were concentrated upon them. Beside them, the sweet face of Julia, the wan and lovely countenance of Lady Norton, were irradiated by its beams.

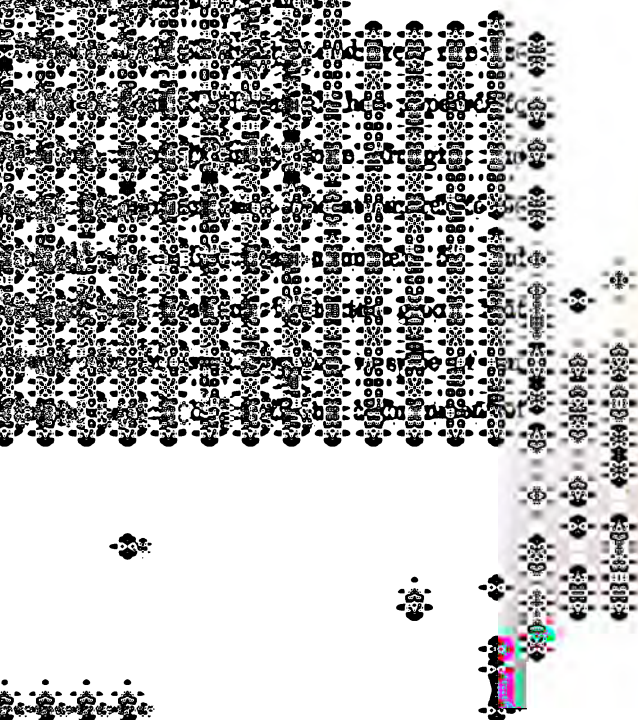
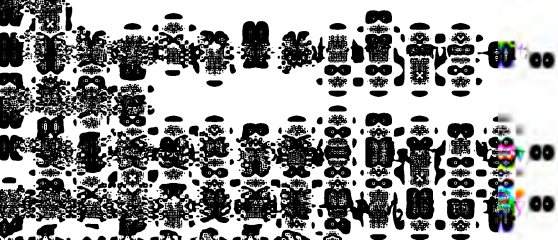
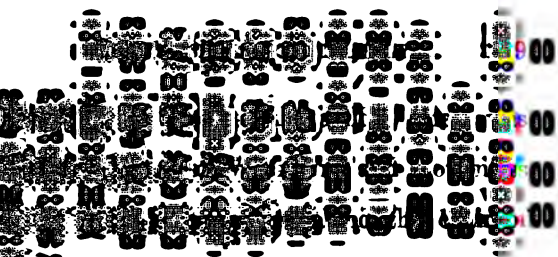
At the conclusion of Harrison's last anecdote, a playful contest for a fan had arisen between Julia and little Jane. Mary pretended to take part against Julia, Fanny and Caroline affected to support her. A mock combat ensued between the four beautiful cousins, all for the amusement of little Jane.

It was concluded by the victory of Mary, who, rising from her seat, waved the contested fan on high, her little daughter, wild with joy, springing upwards to seize it, uttering inarticulate cries of delight.

It was at this moment, when, owing to her attitude, all the superb and queenlike beauty of Mary's face and form became most strikingly apparent, and when her spirits, risen to the highest pitch, were welling forth in a few notes of some joyous old song which she knew her child loved, that the sun went down, and instantly a sudden gloom succeeded to an intense brilliancy.

At the same moment, the child, changing its cry of pleasure to one of terror, clung to its mother's robe, and, gazing fearfully behind the group into the now dark apartment, exclaimed in terrified accents, "Oh!—mamma! mamma!"

Struck with sudden awe, all rose from their seats, and gazed fearfully in the direction in-



the party into the dining-room gave a fresh turn to our thoughts, and a renewed impulse to our spirits.

END OF VOL. II.

London: HENRY RICHARDS, Brydges-street, Covent-garden.



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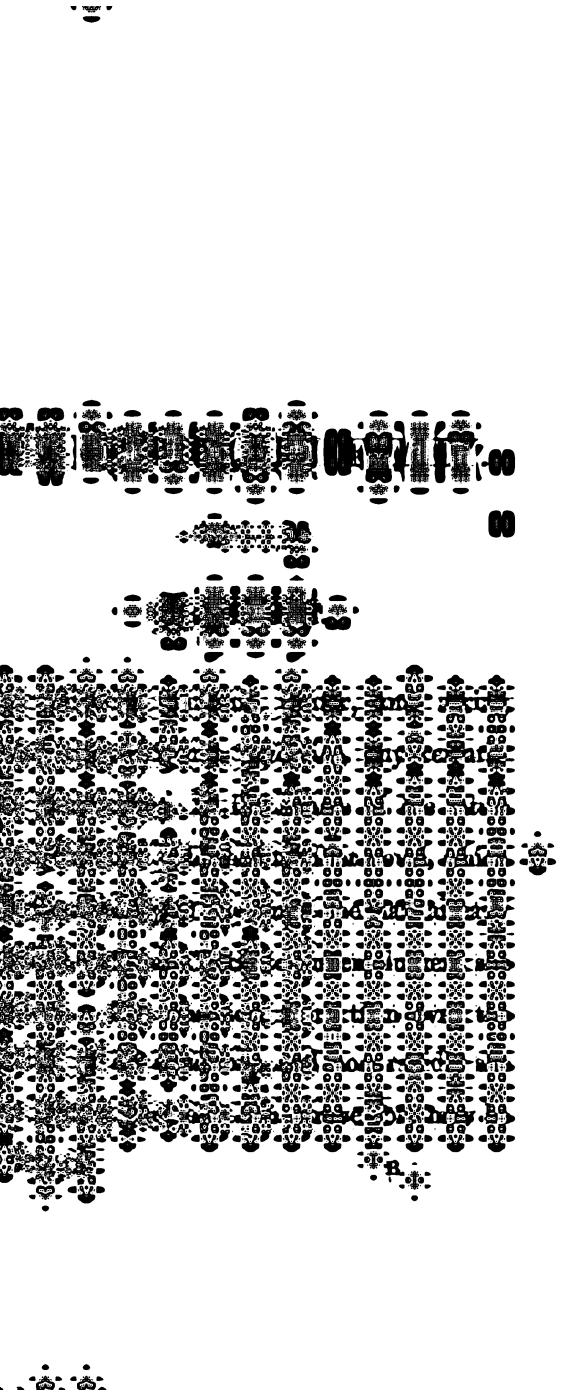
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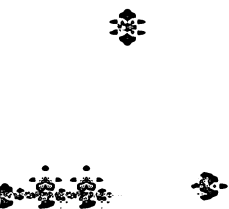
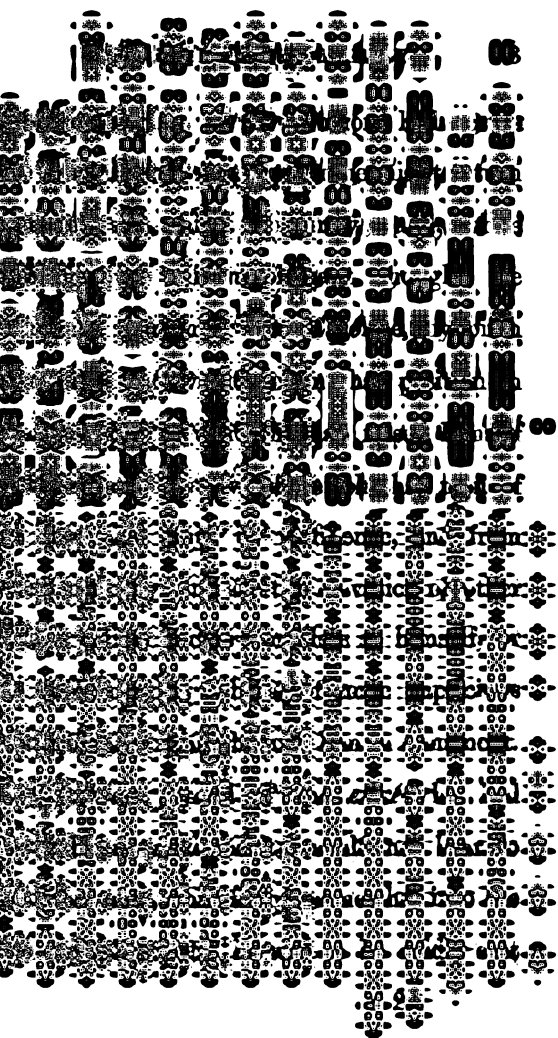


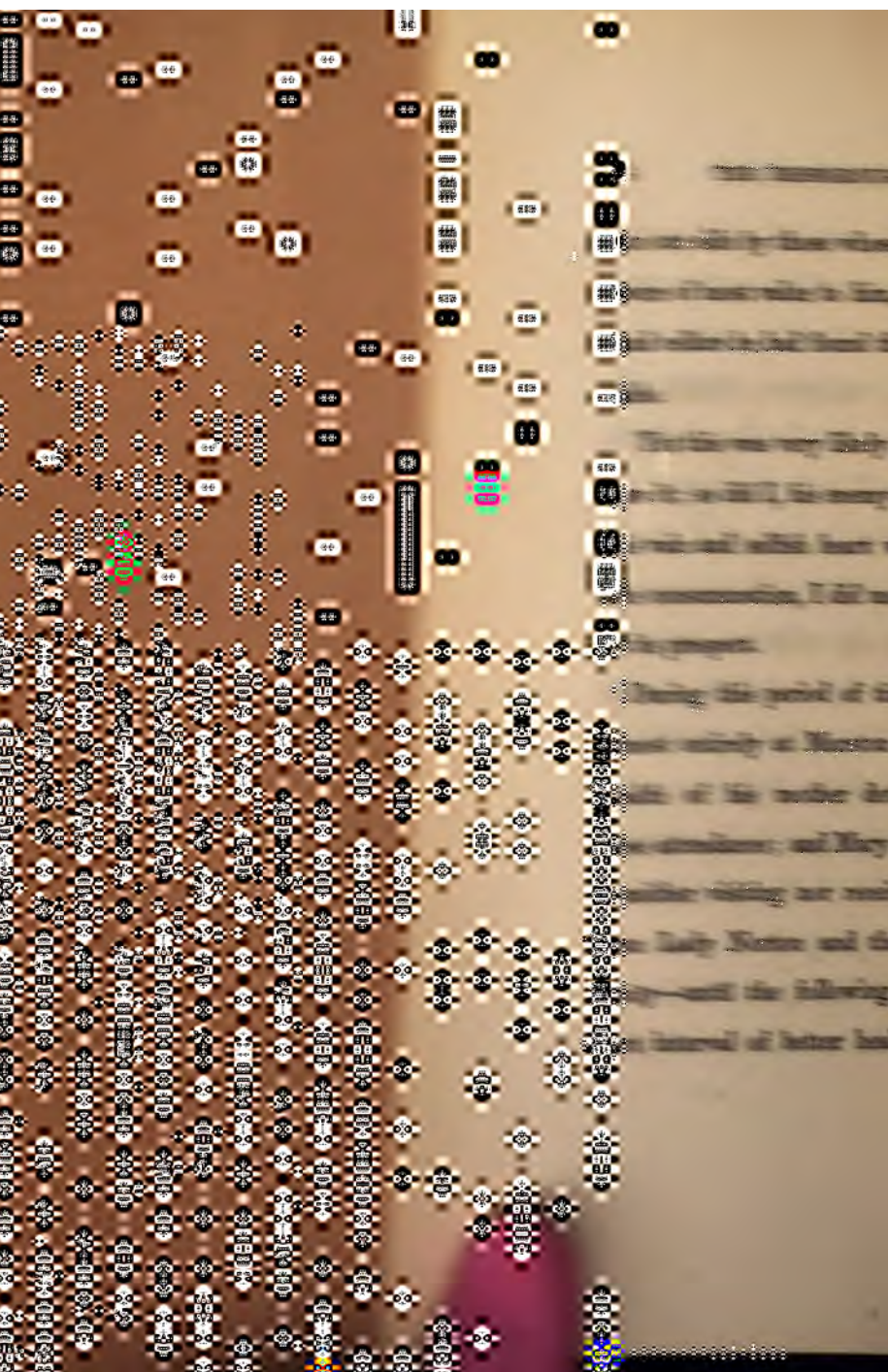
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inferred from the fact that George Danvers, by no means an unconcerned spectator of what was passing, made many efforts to regain his once familiar footing in the Desborough family.

Generally speaking, Danvers, in those circles where lions most do congregate, held the first place. I have already told how he had contrived to acquire the reputation necessary for this, and to retain it for so long. But every dog has his day, and lions also ; and among that clique, whose opinion and whose patronage were the only ones he valued, George Danvers was beginning to be less noticed. He remarked this with a jealous eye—especially as that clique was the one to which Caroline essentially belonged. An uneasy feeling seemed to take





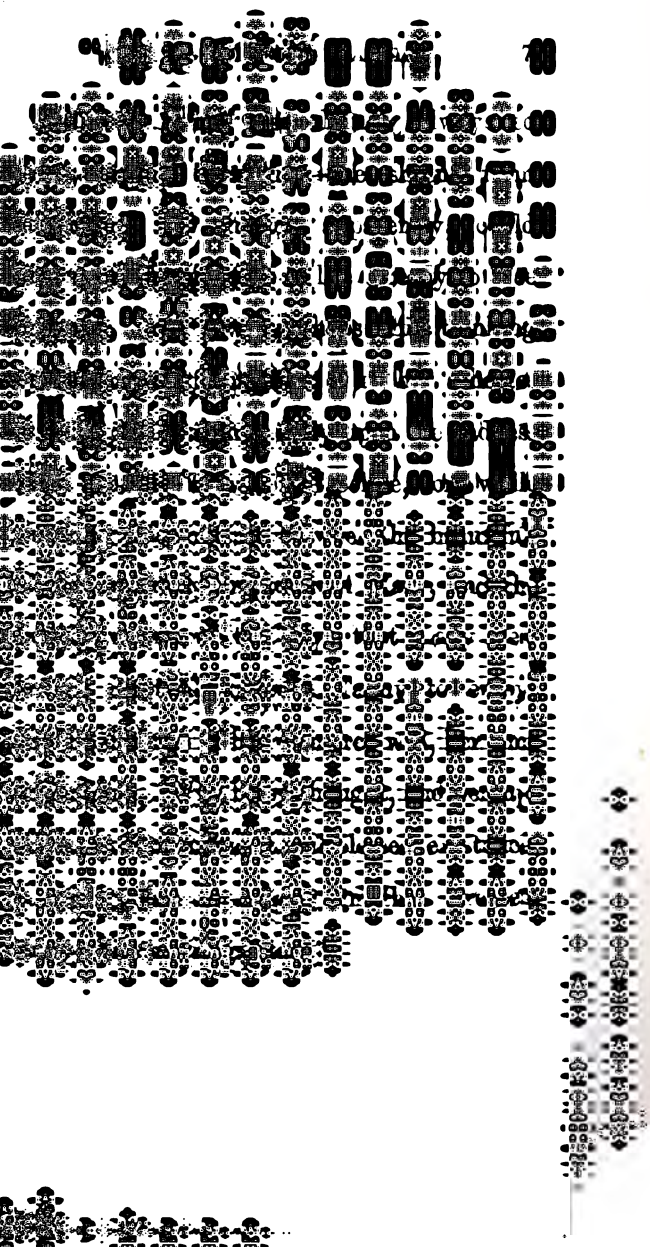
old lady left her son and daughter-in-law more at liberty to follow their ordinary occupations.

To us, the spring brought its accustomed round of gaiety; to Caroline, a repetition of the triumphs of the preceding year; to Julia, the happiness of again seeing, though for but a brief space, young Frederick Wentworth; to Fanny, the same admiration from her three constant admirers—Lord Newton, Murray, and Tom Wilmot.

Fanny was now of age, so was Julia; but Lady Desborough had ceased to urge them to choose for themselves a suitable connexion. Julia's attachment, justly to be termed an "unfortunate" one, she trusted to time to remove: she and her lover were both young

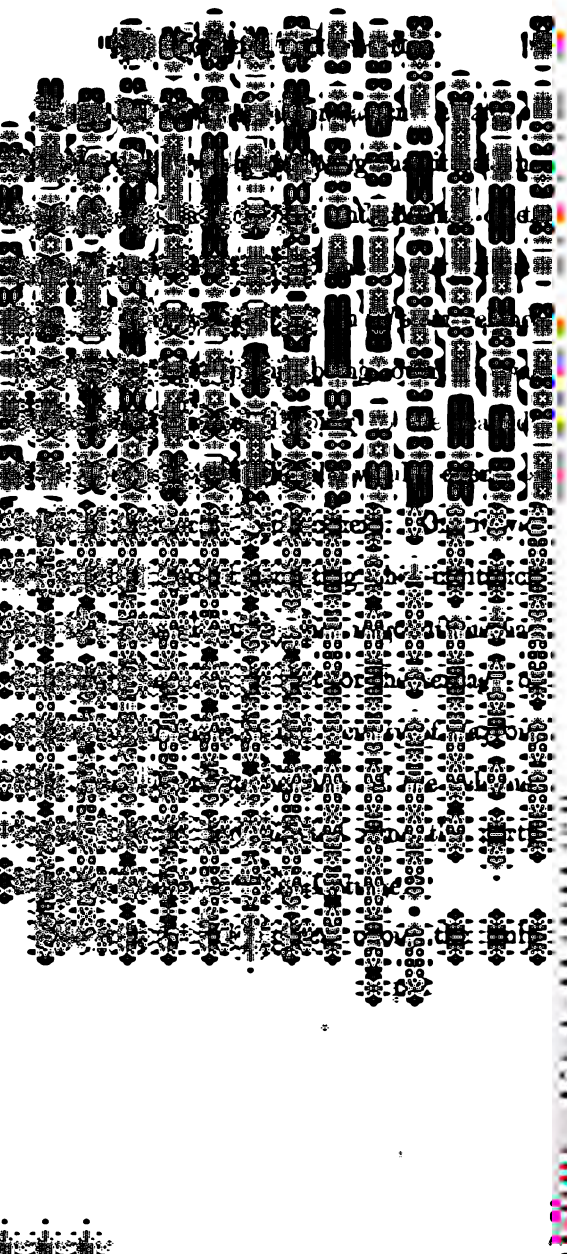
THE BROUGH FAMILY.

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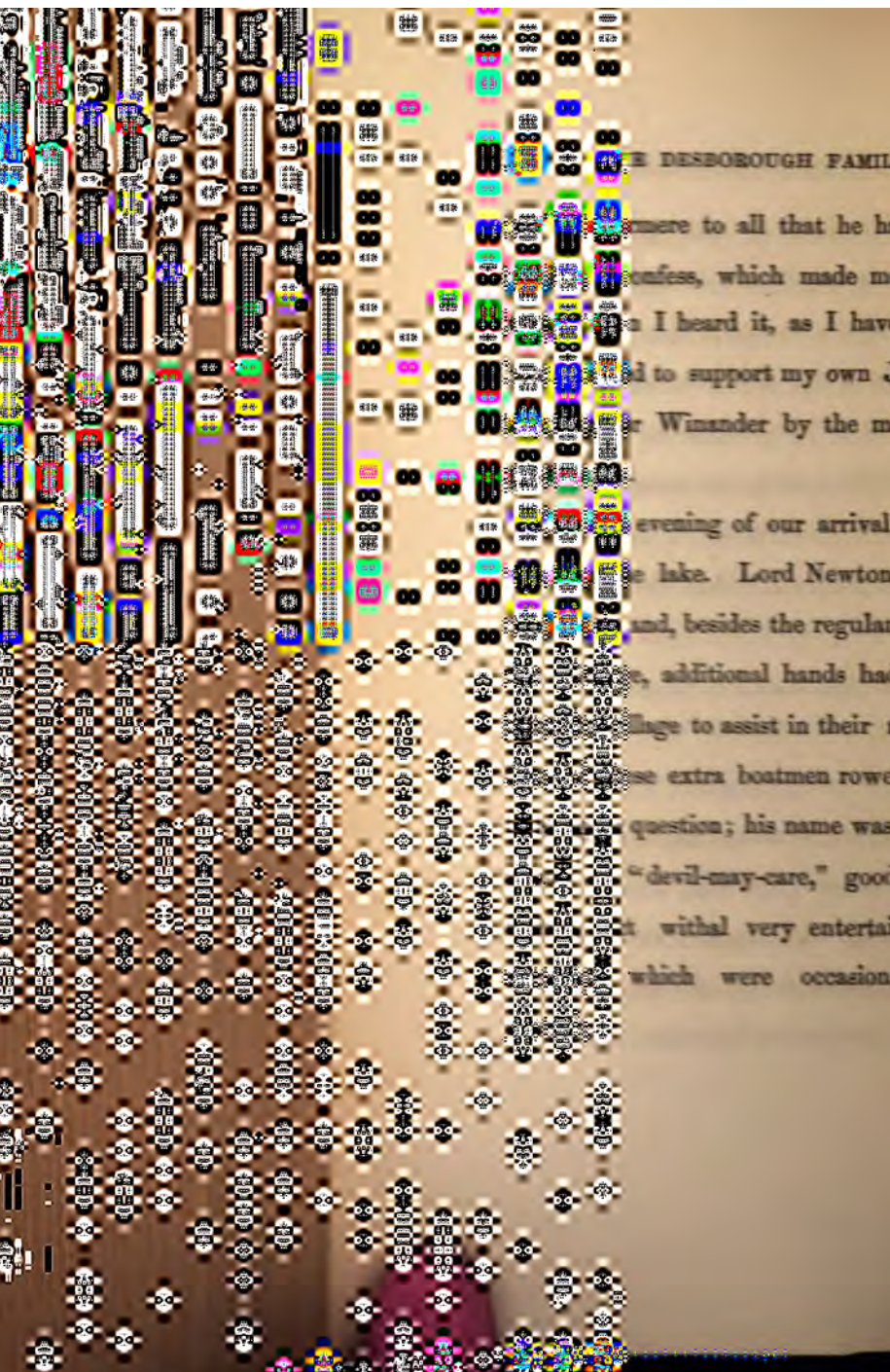


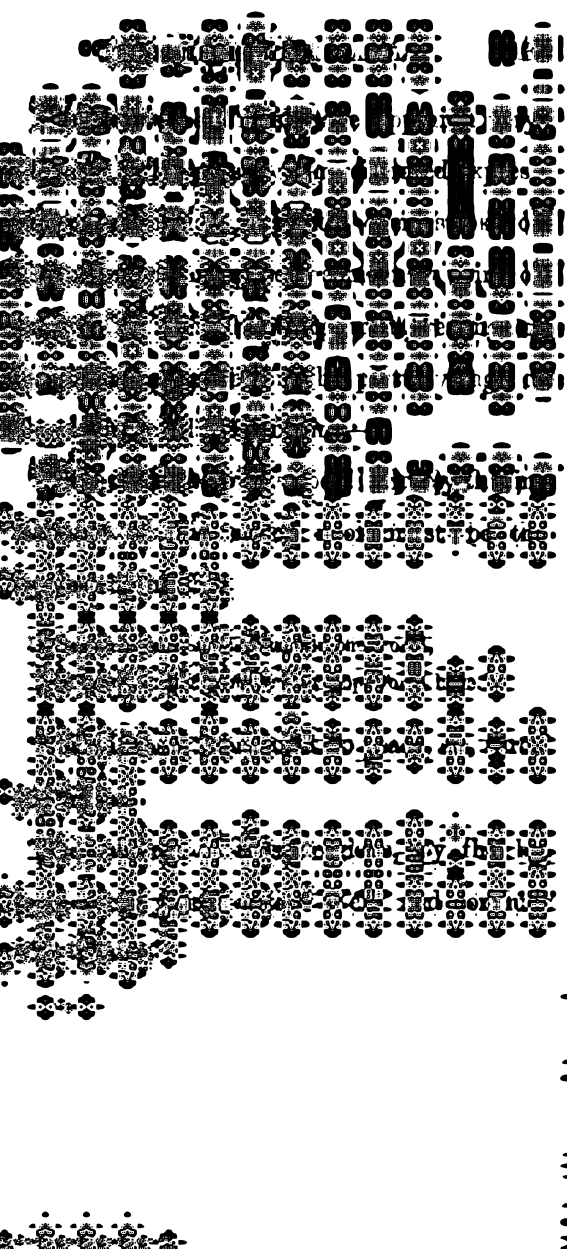


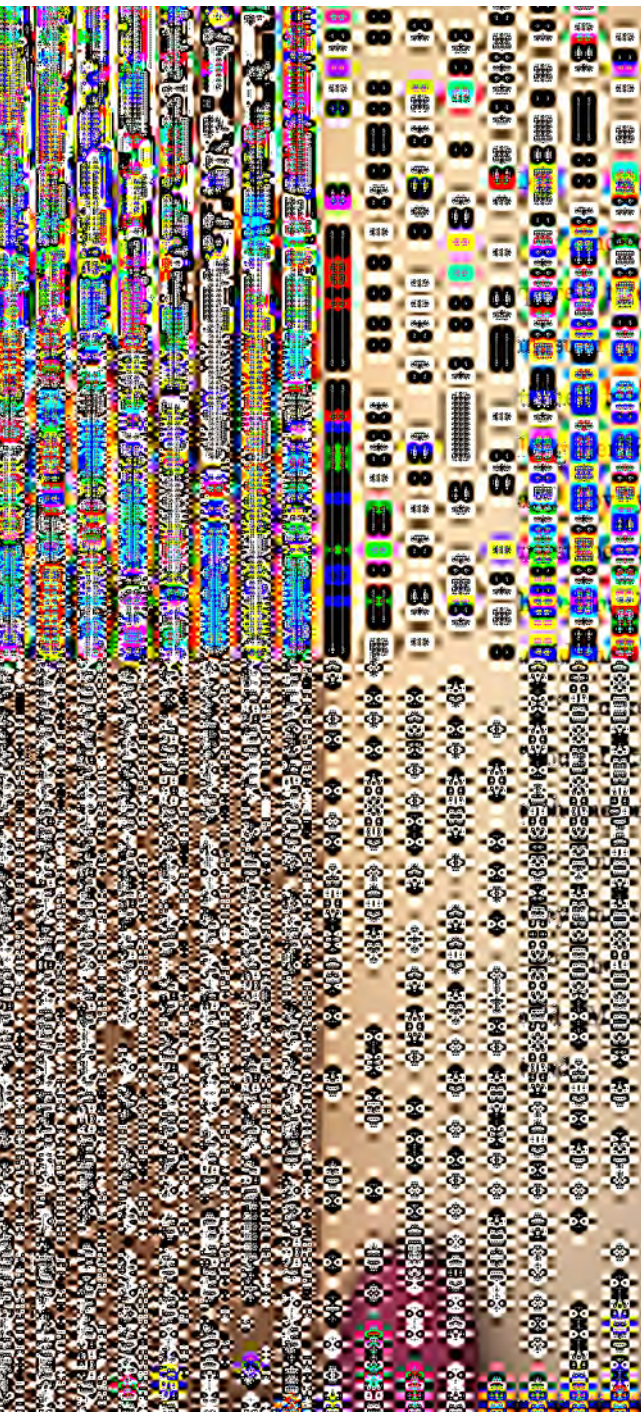
THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY
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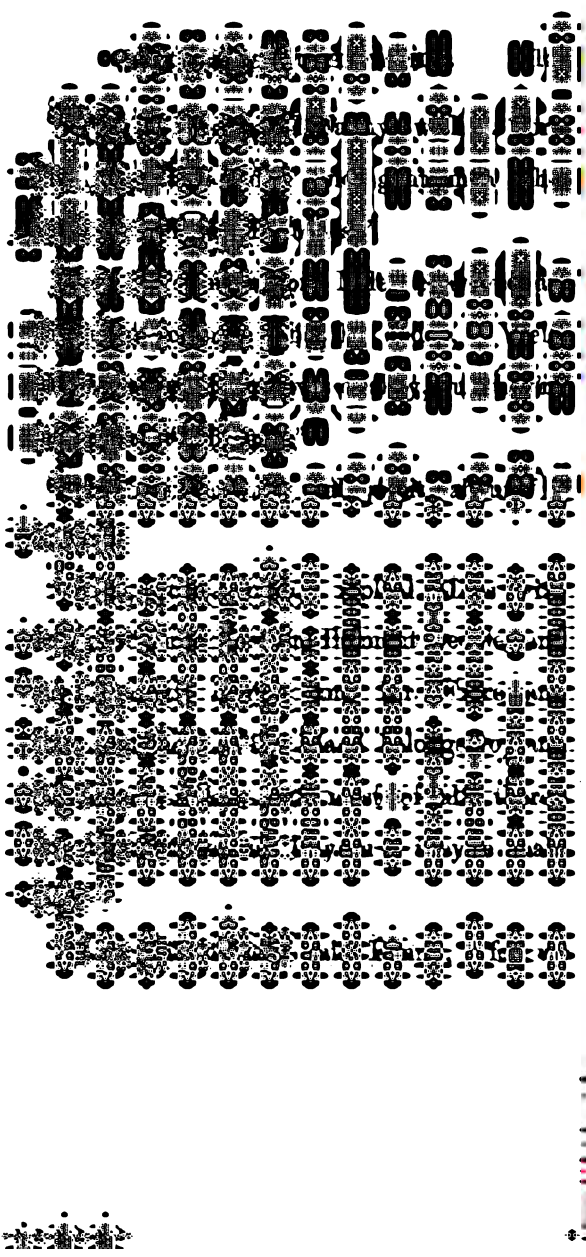


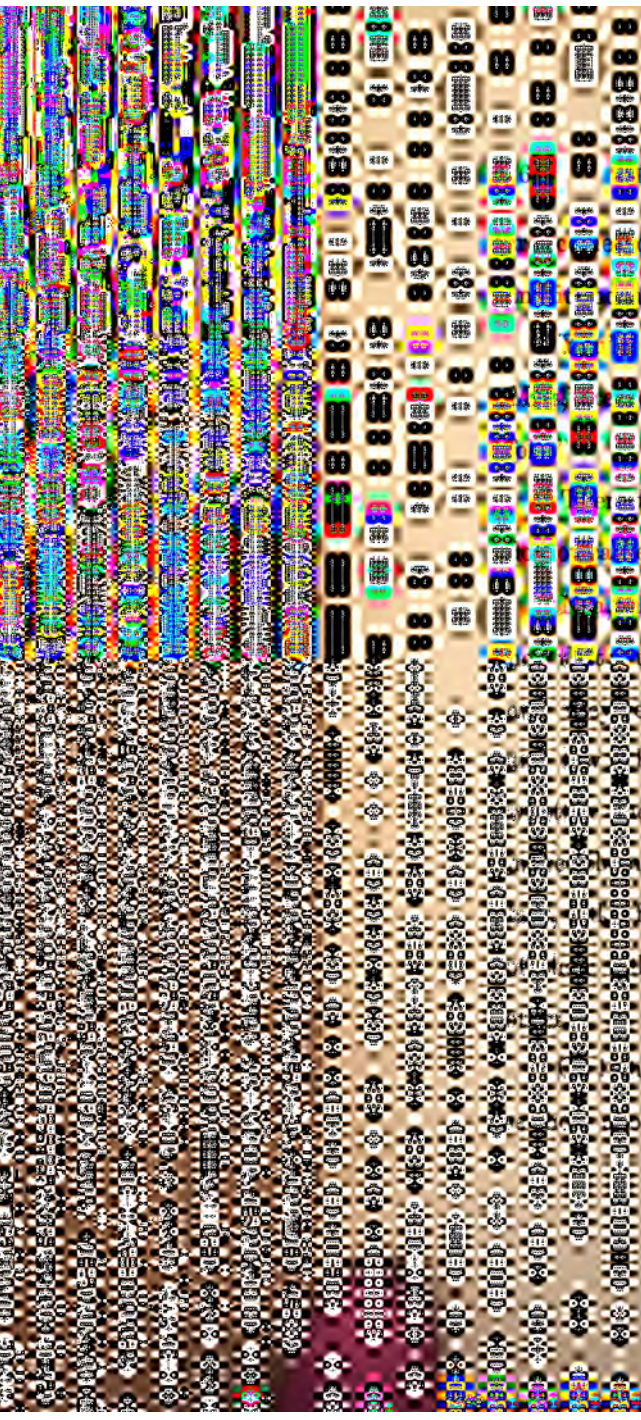






THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY
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THE DESBOROUGH FAMIL

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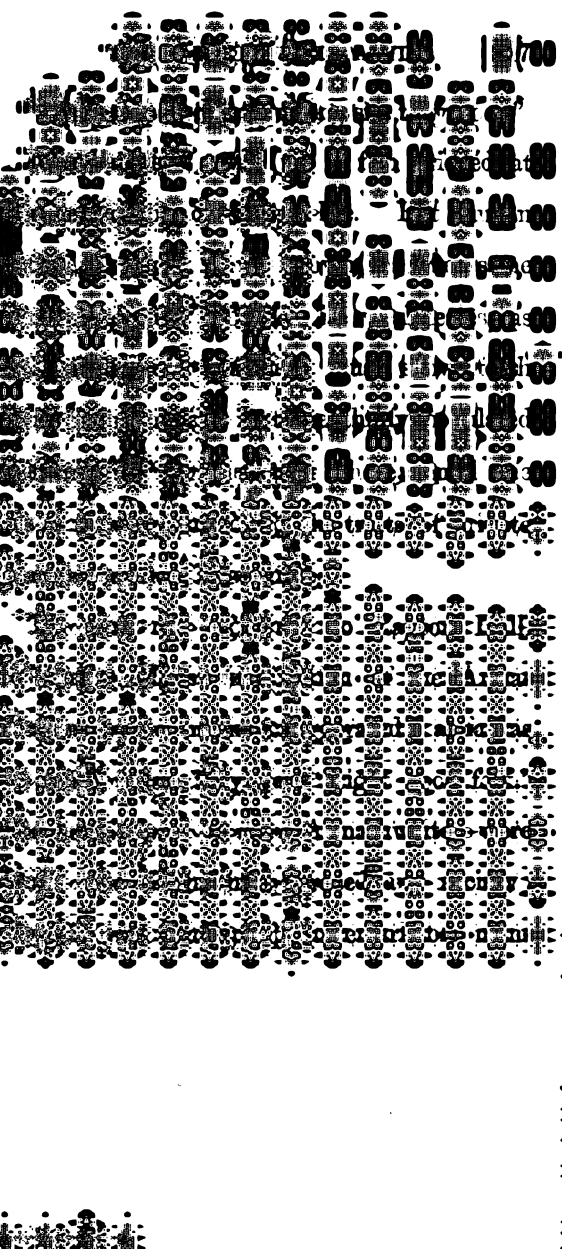
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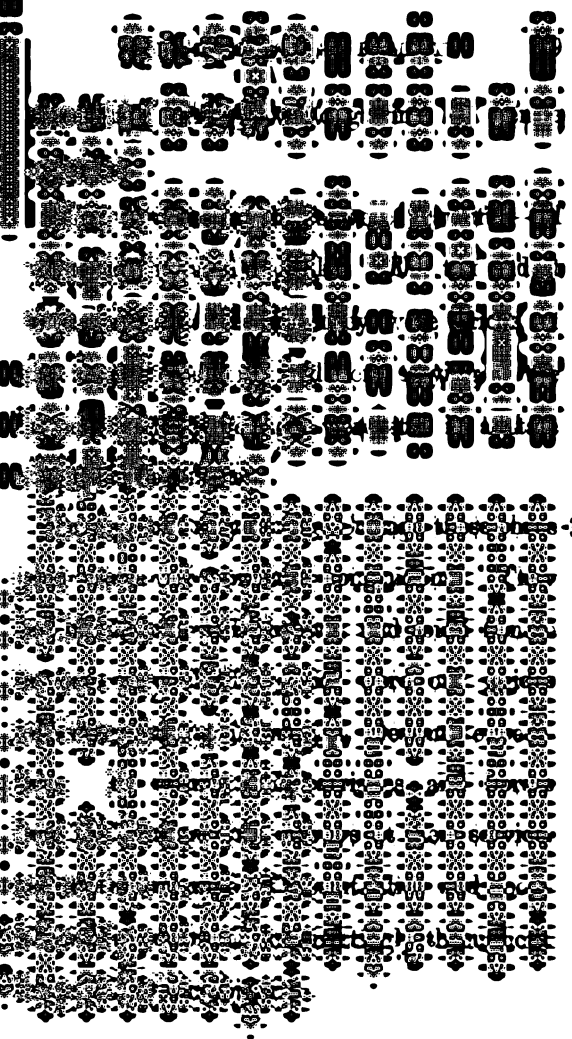
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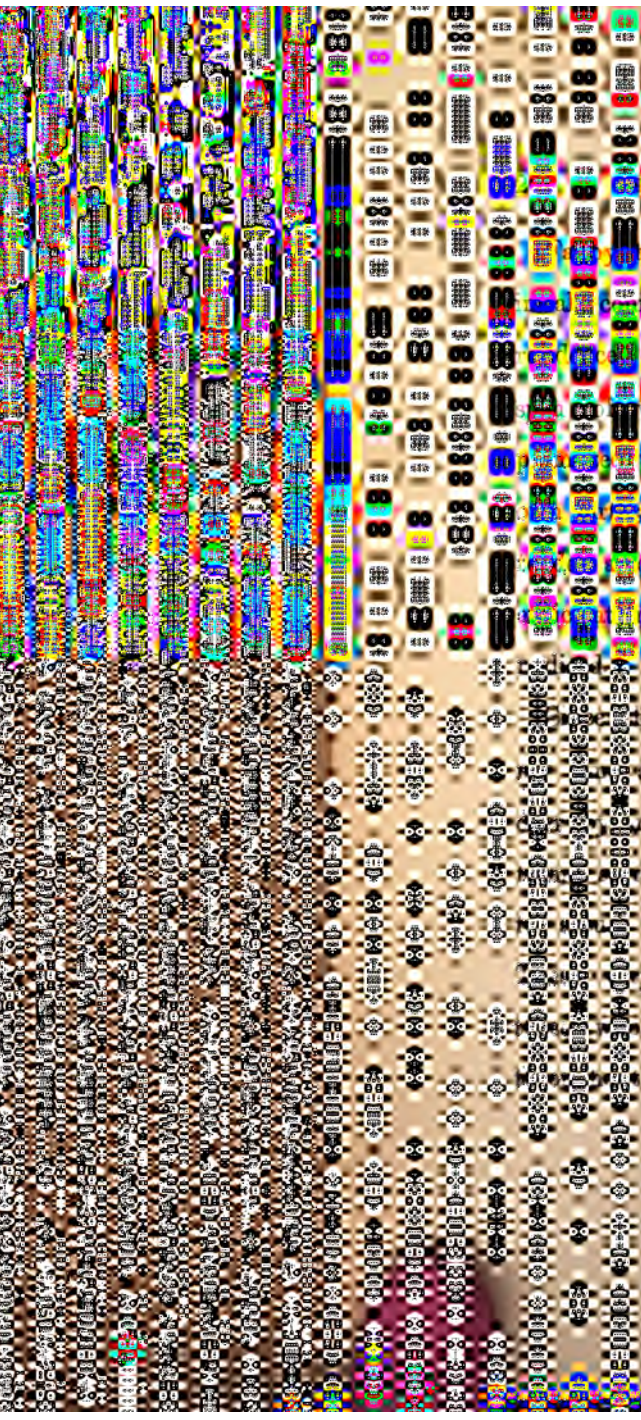


THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY

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THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY

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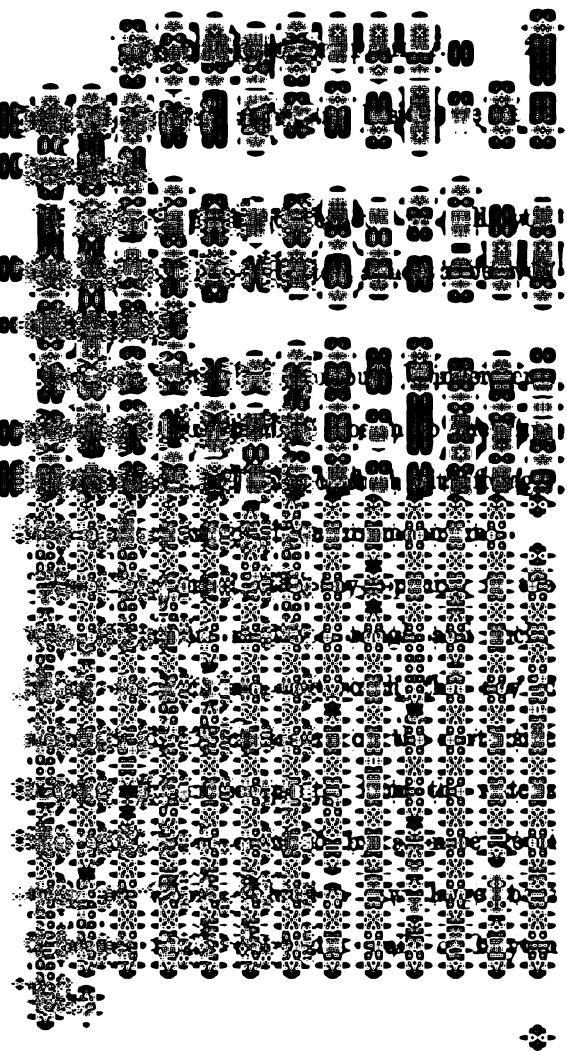
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DESBOROUGH FAMILY.

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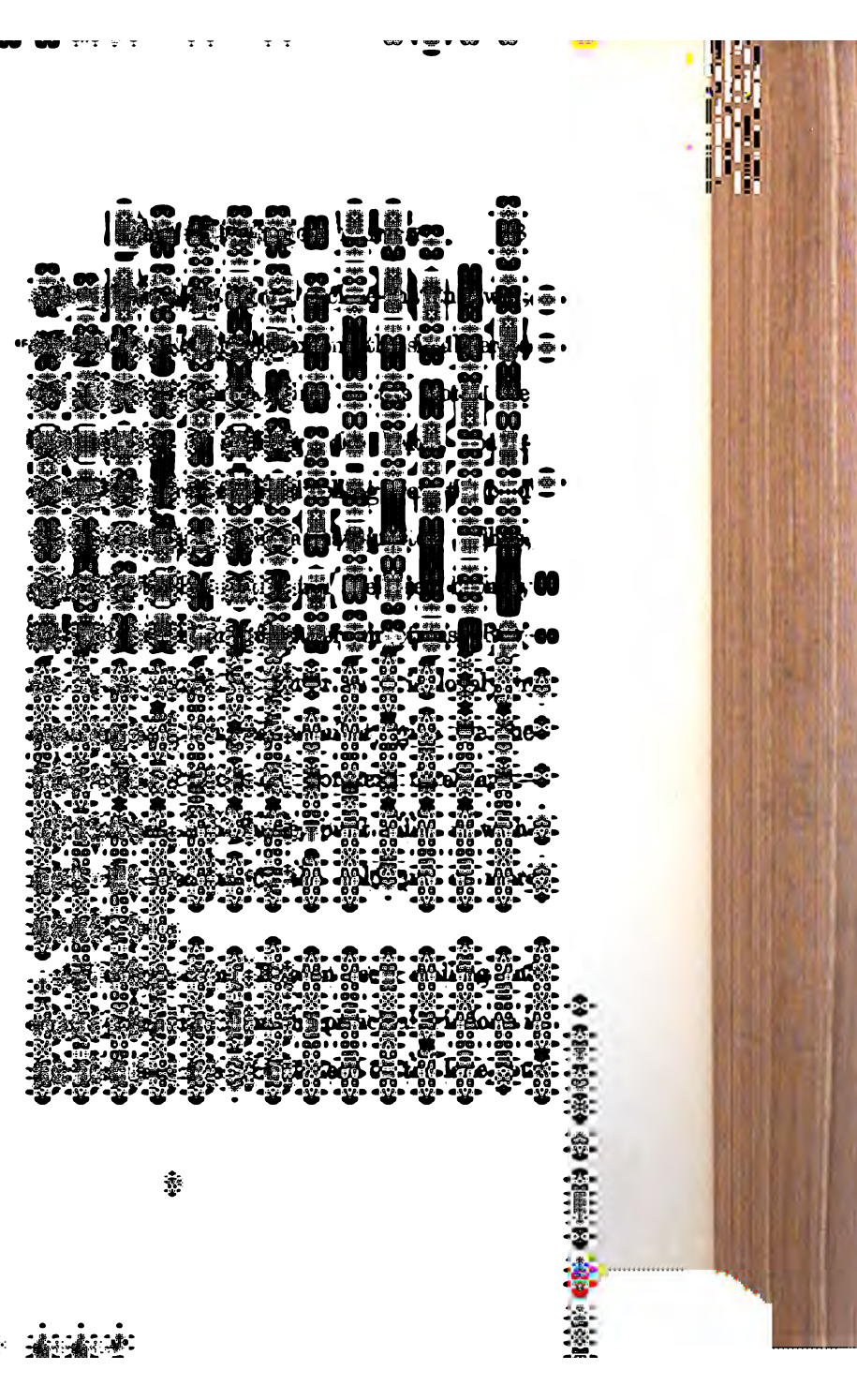
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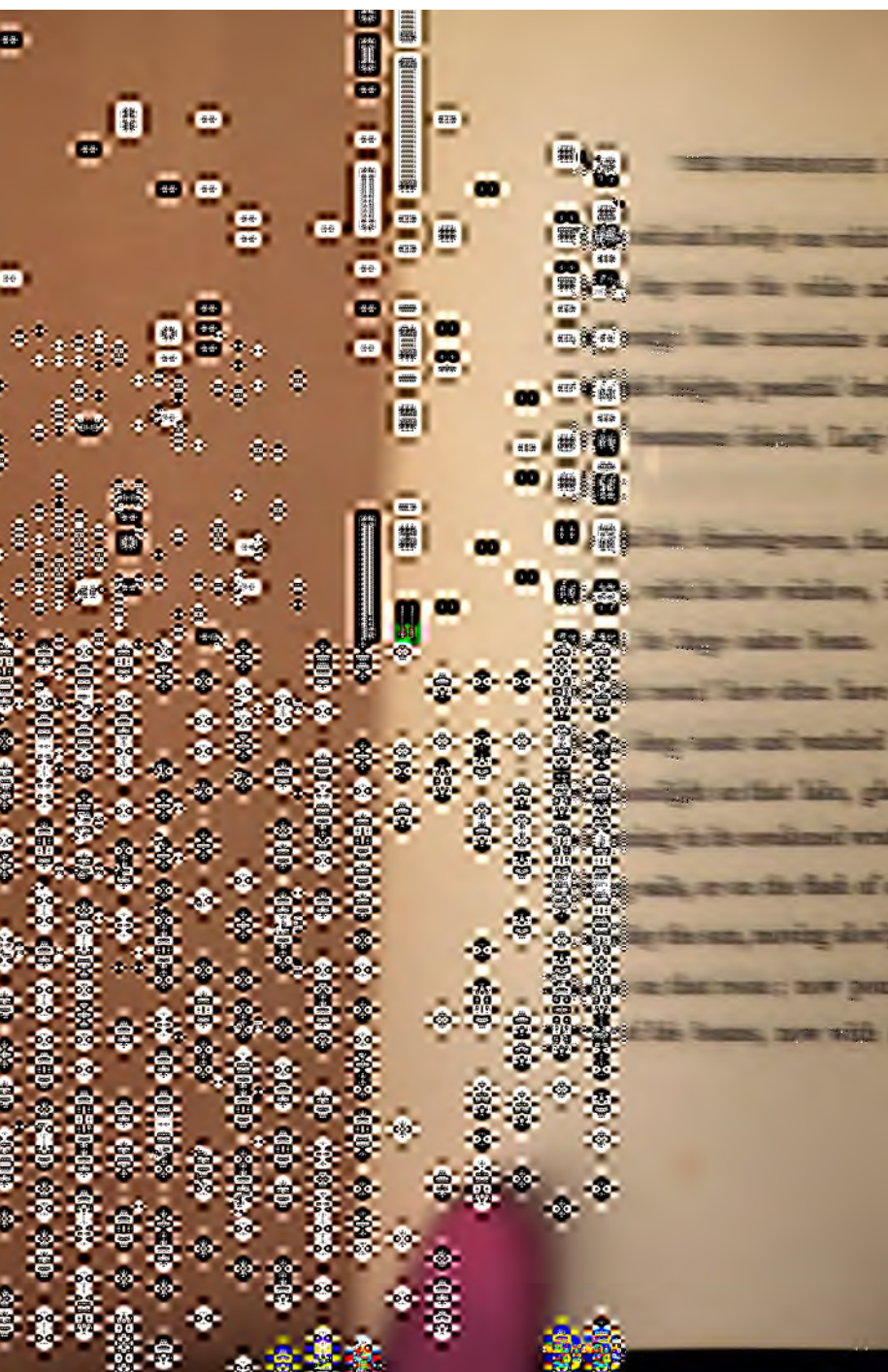
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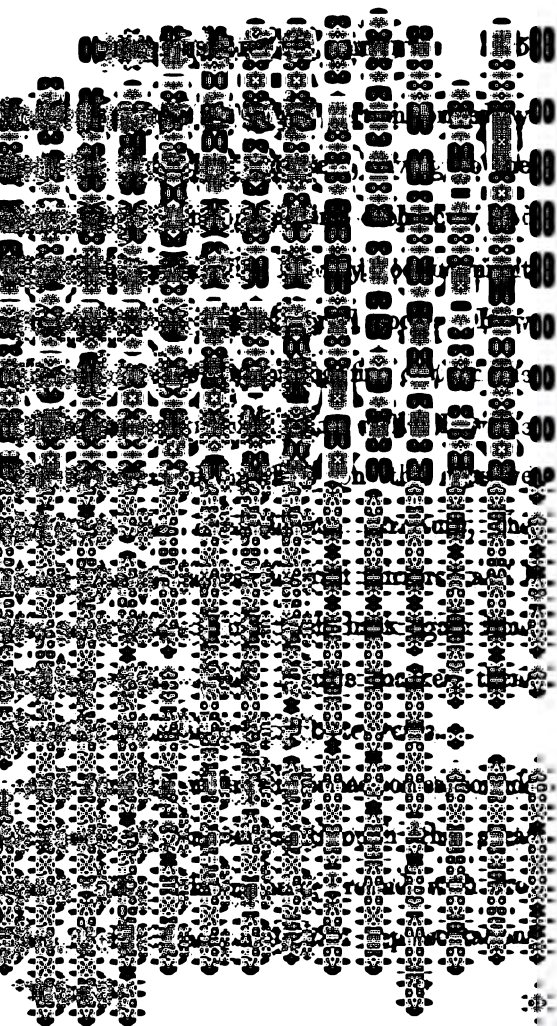
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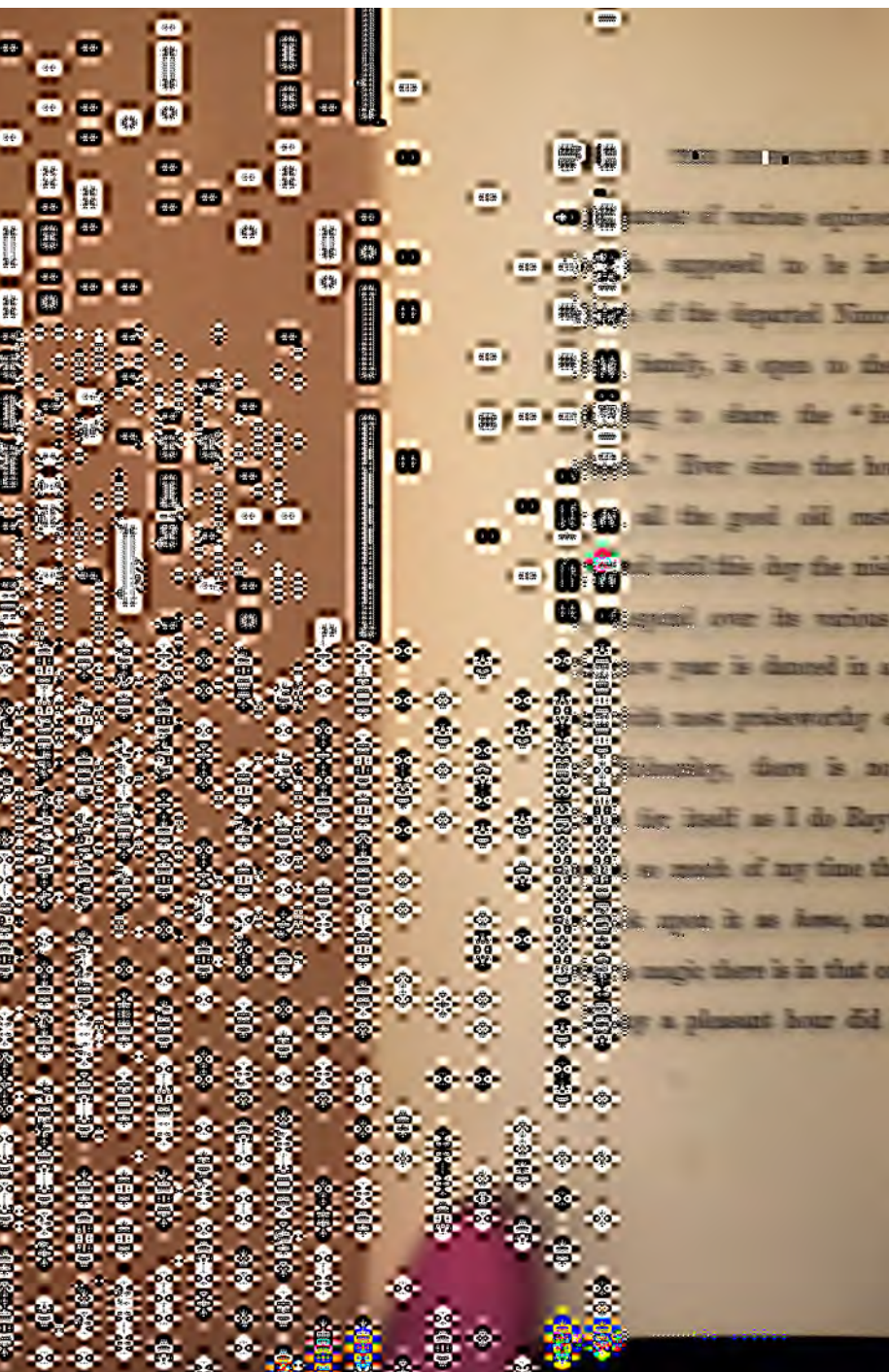
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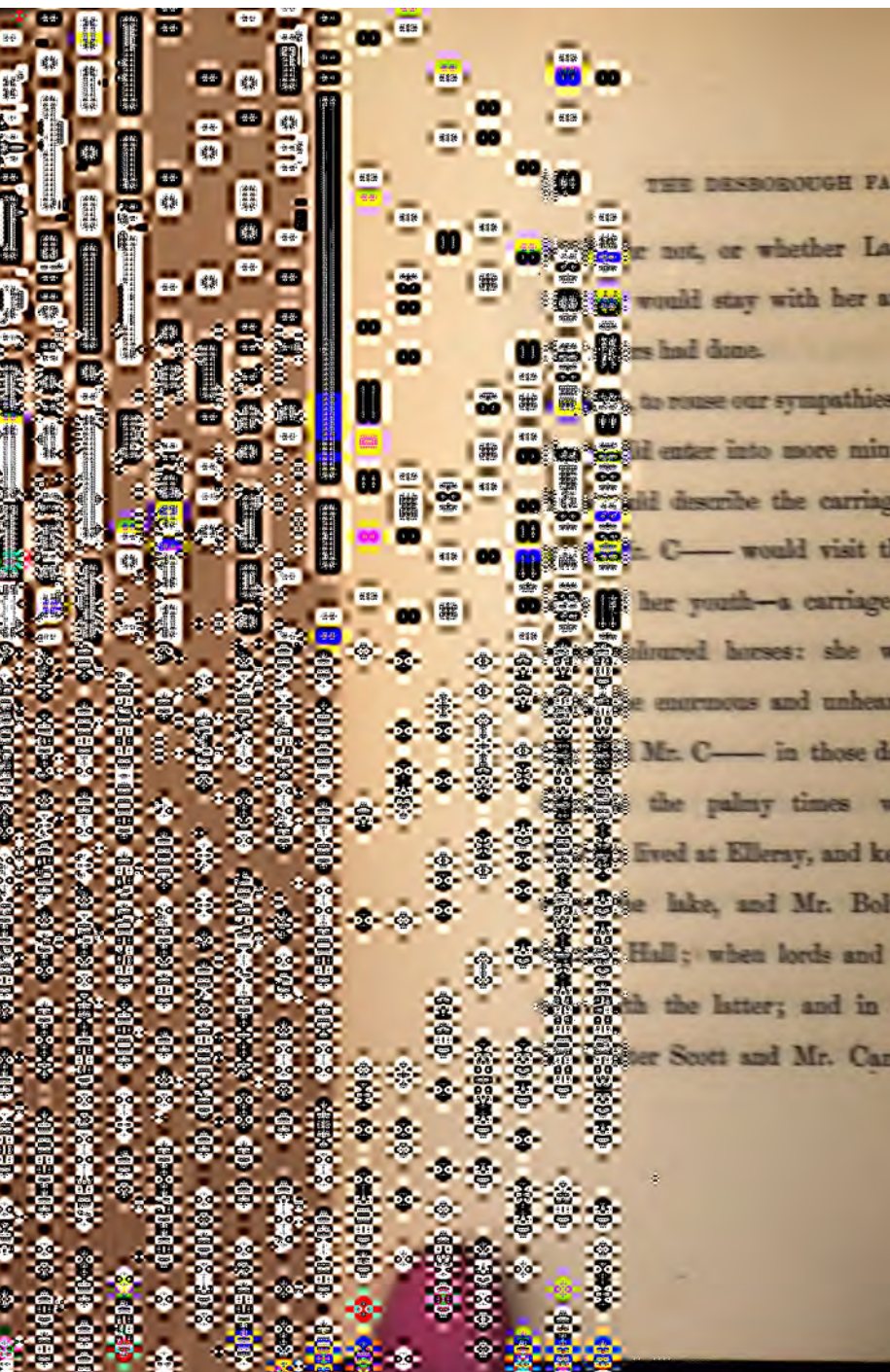




the time of the Armathwaites, and many a hearty laugh have we had together; they were very merry girls, and all, both married and single, could find something to laugh at themselves, or to make others laugh, in everything that took place. But though they had a turn for the ludicrous, they were very good-natured, and Fanny would vainly try and extract from them a confirmation of Jack Miles's account of the village disposition; when questioned on the subject, all would laugh as though very much amused with their own thoughts, but not one word of censure of, or of ridicule upon, the follies or the faults of their neighbours ever escaped them.

This, to me, was the best trait in their

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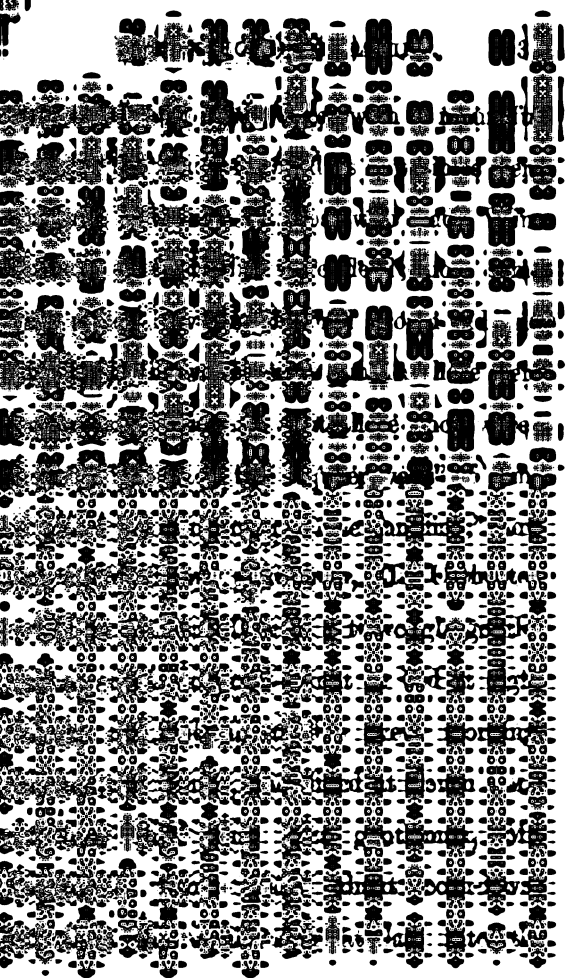
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THE DESBOROUGH FAMILY

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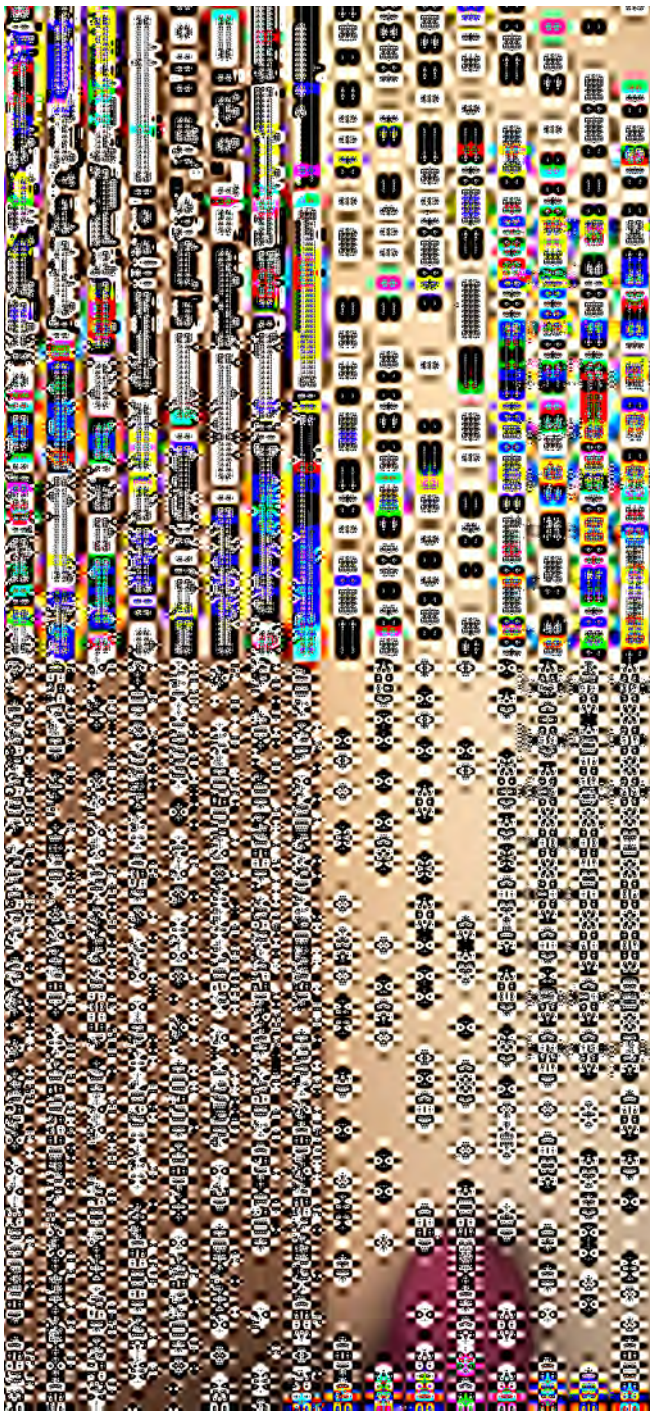
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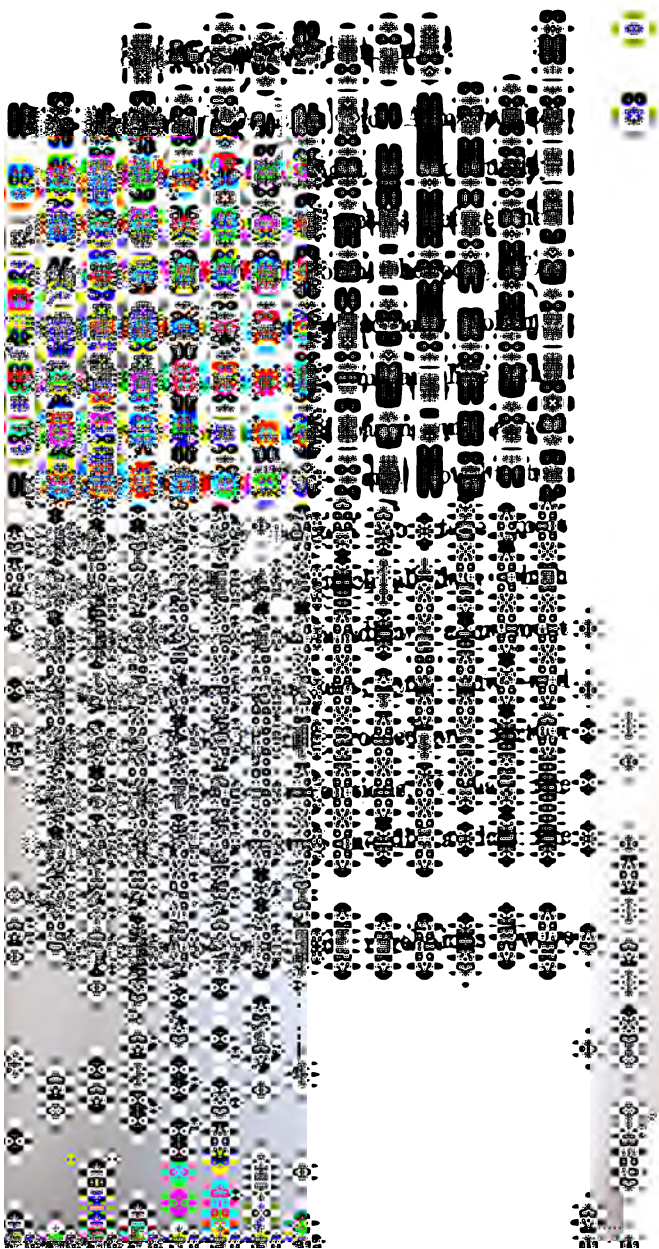
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DESBOROUGH FAM
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DESBOROUGH FAMILY

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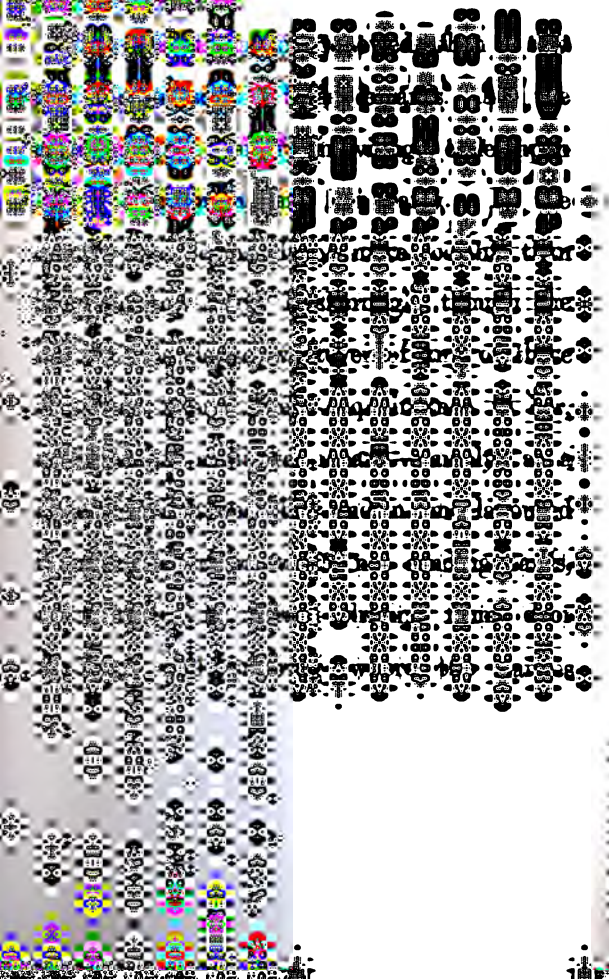
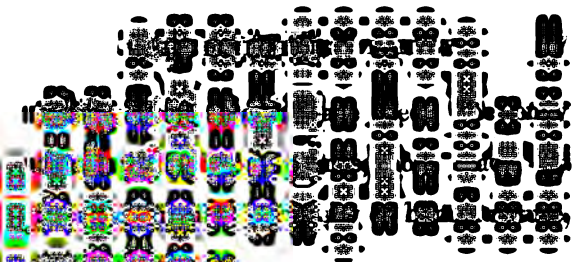
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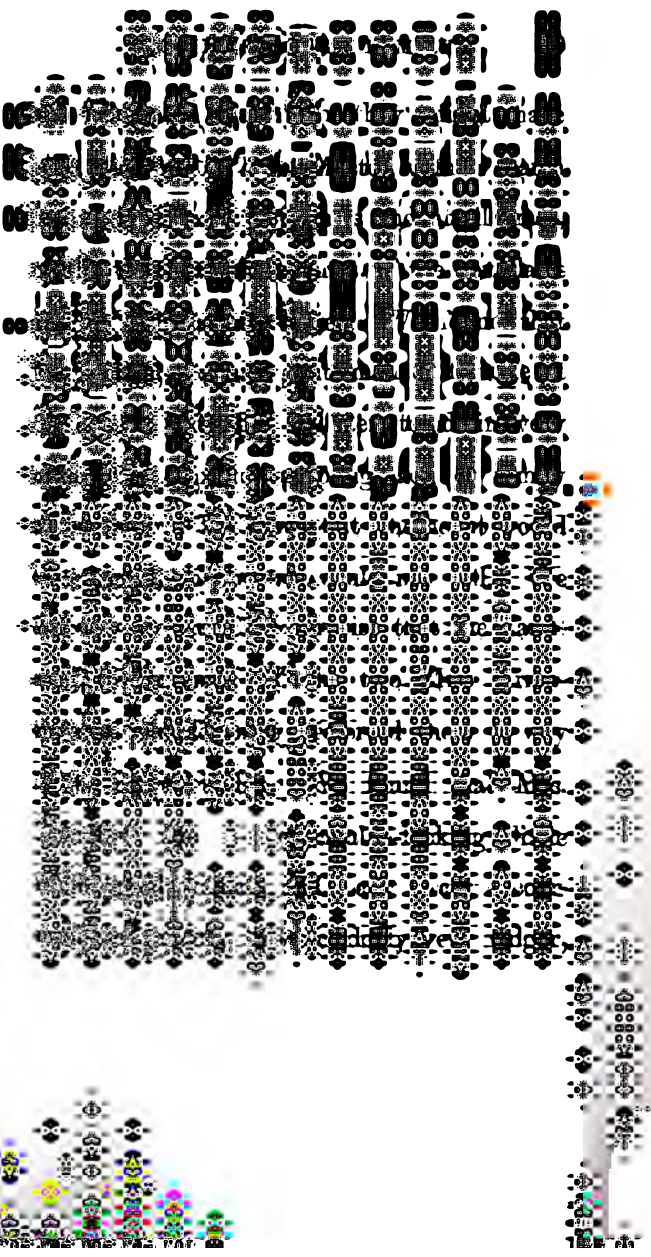


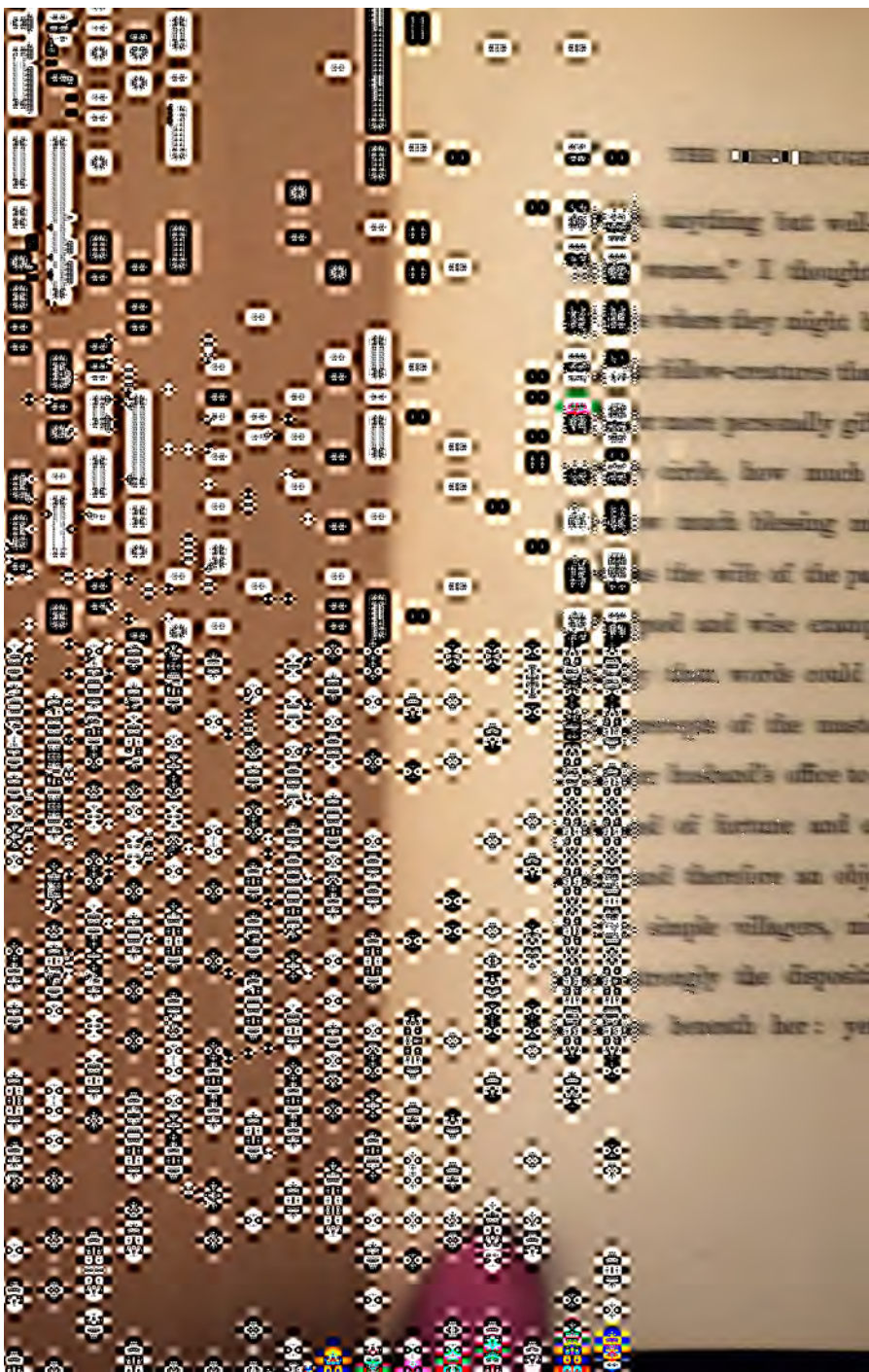
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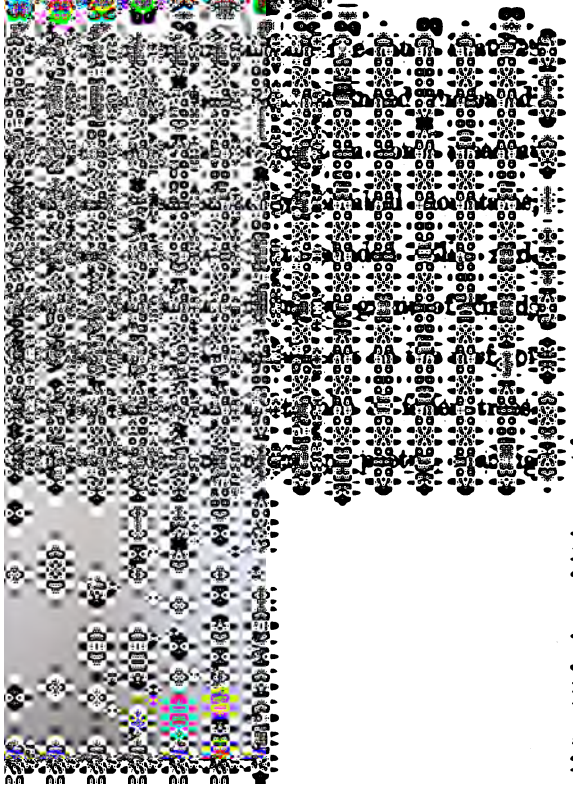
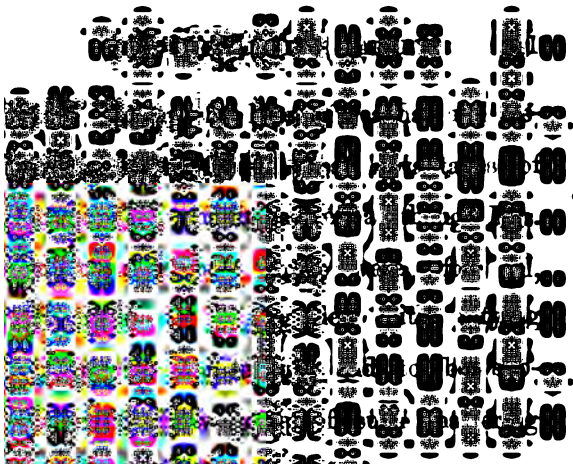
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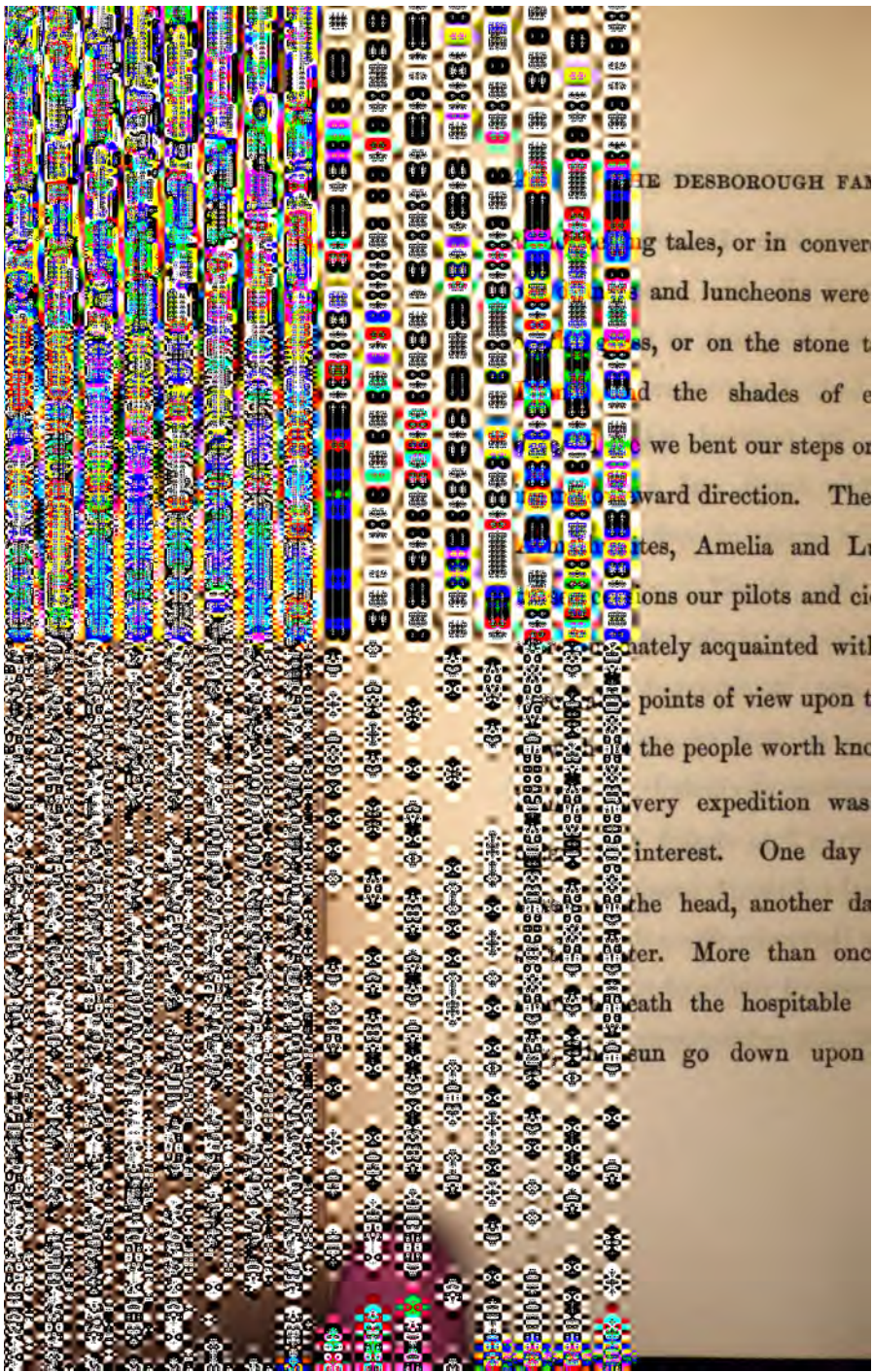
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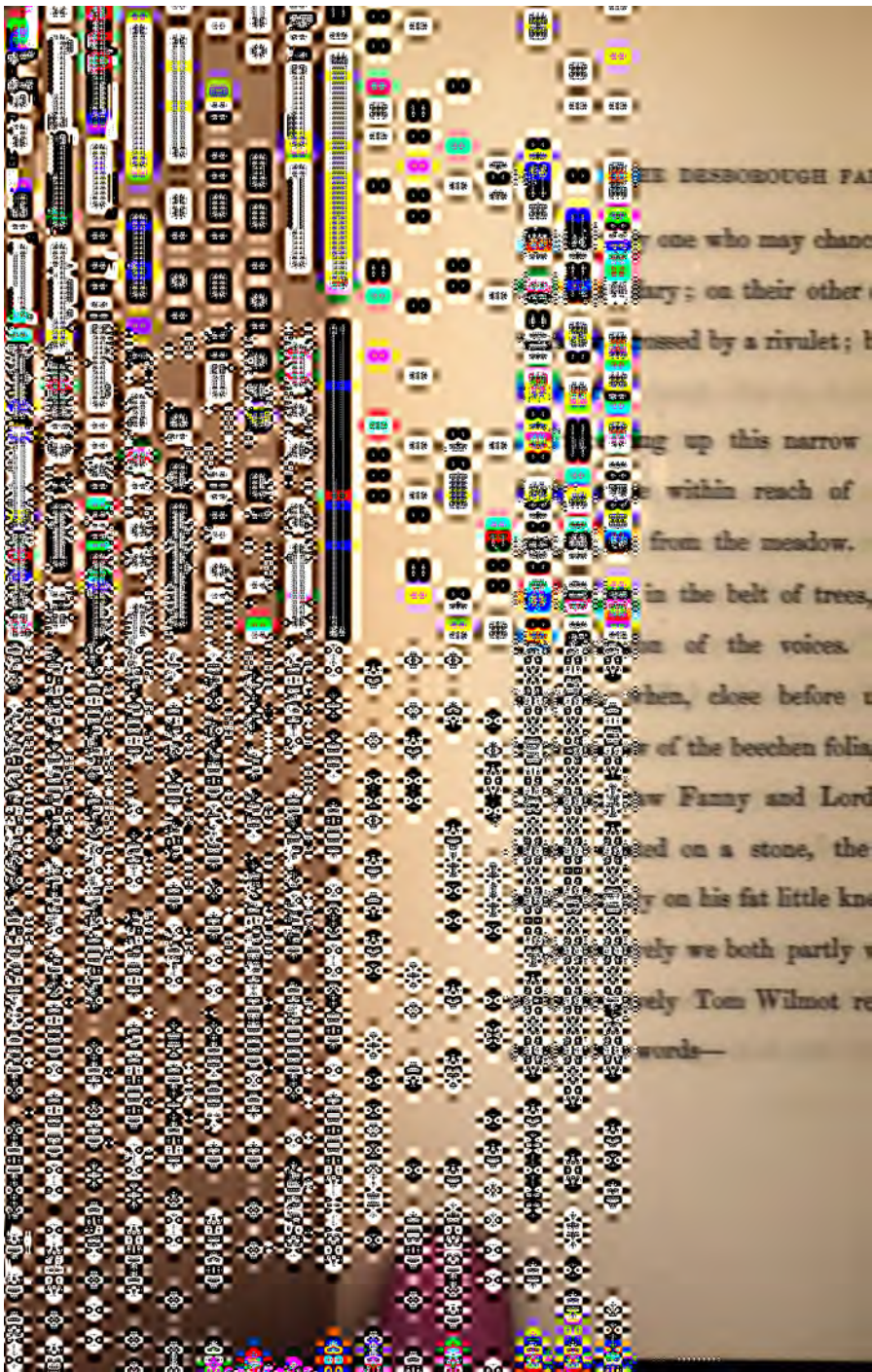


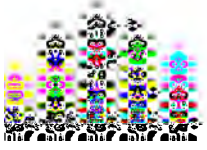
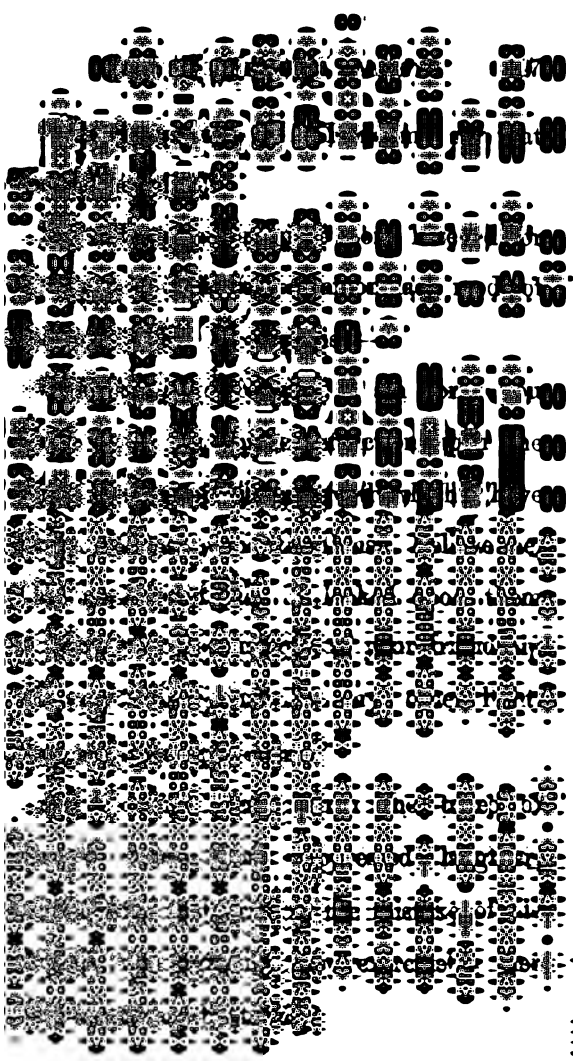
THE DESBOROUGH FAIR
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THE FAMILY.

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a line of light which,
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all-absorbing sea
described the rough sides
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the Langdale Pikes:
lively bay, beneath the
trees, we would pause,
to take us whither it
forth our hands to
we floated past their





Lord Newton also perceived her agitation. With all his foibles he was a true gentleman. He rose as well as he could, haling himself up by the branch of a tree, and offered her his arm.

"I am very sorry," he said, "to have distressed you. Pray, Miss Random, believe me, if you do not wish it, I will press the subject no further; but tell me once more, *have* I a chance. Will time, patience, effect anything in my favour?"

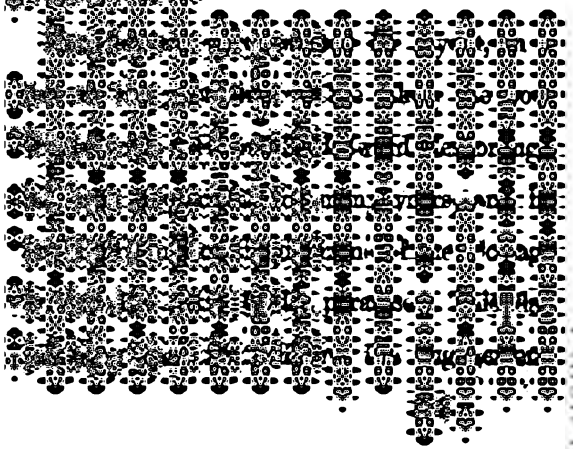
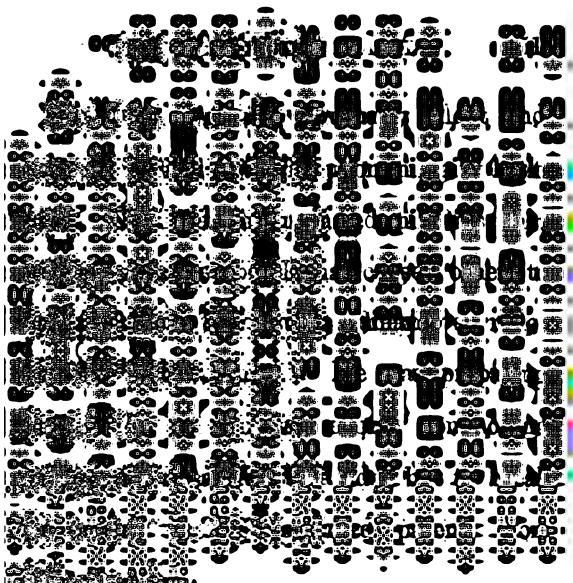
There was a pause. With breathless interest Tom Wilmot leaned forward to catch the reply. It came at last.—

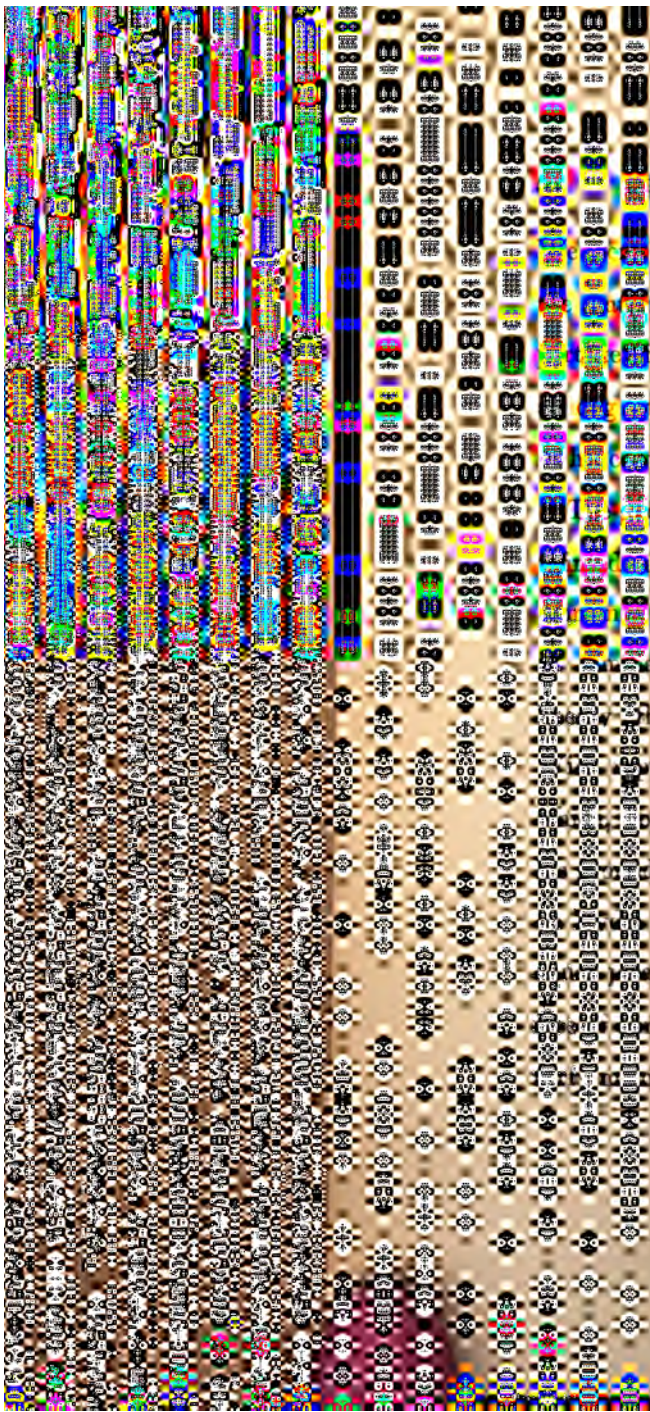
"No, Lord Newton; proud as I feel of your preference, much as I esteem you, I yet must answer decidedly, No. Yet let us still be



walking very fast; nor did he speak one word until we reached the entrance-gate of the Cottage, when a rencontre with a group of pedestrians, consisting of his father, mother, Mr. Armathwaite, and Sir Edward, forced him into conversation.

Fanny kept this proposal, as she had done others, to herself. I and Tom, who were alone in the secret, fancied we could discern a slight restraint in her manner when brought in contact with Lord Newton, and a sort of pleasing pensiveness pervading the rotundity of the noble visage of the rejected suitor: imagined we detected a deeper shade of colour upon *her* cheek—an usual “paling of the purple” on a most conspicuous feature of *his* face.





THE DESBOROUGH FA

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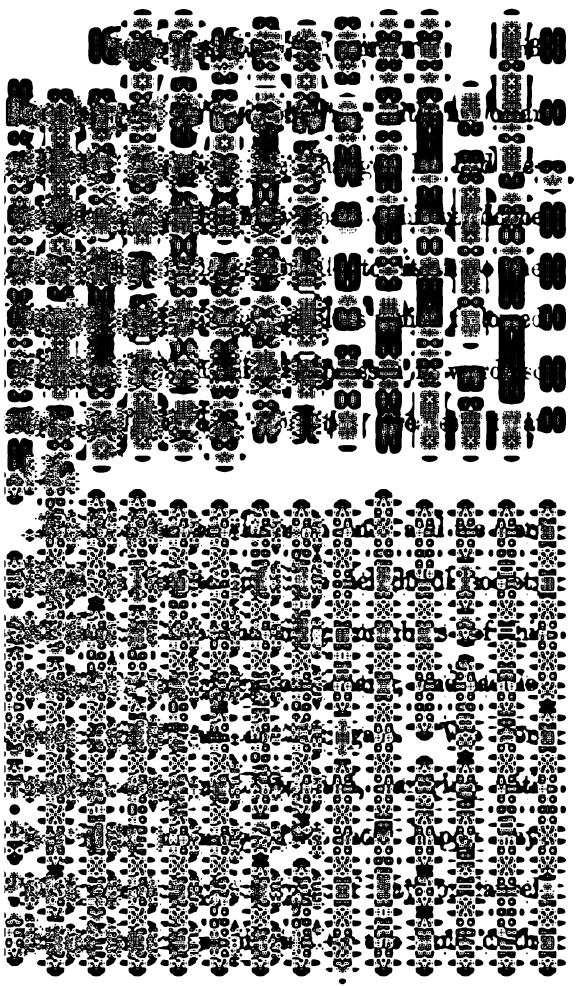
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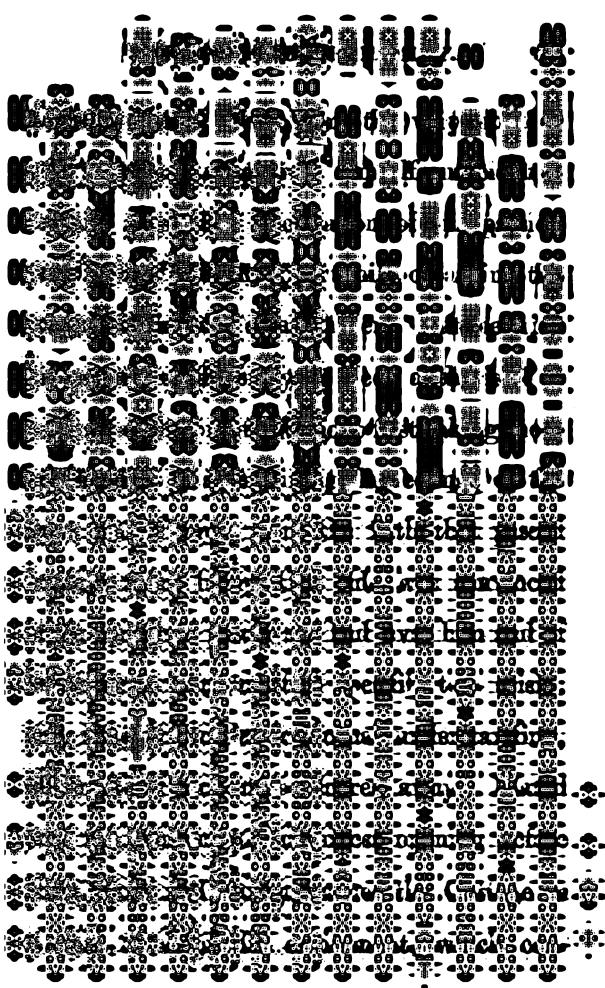
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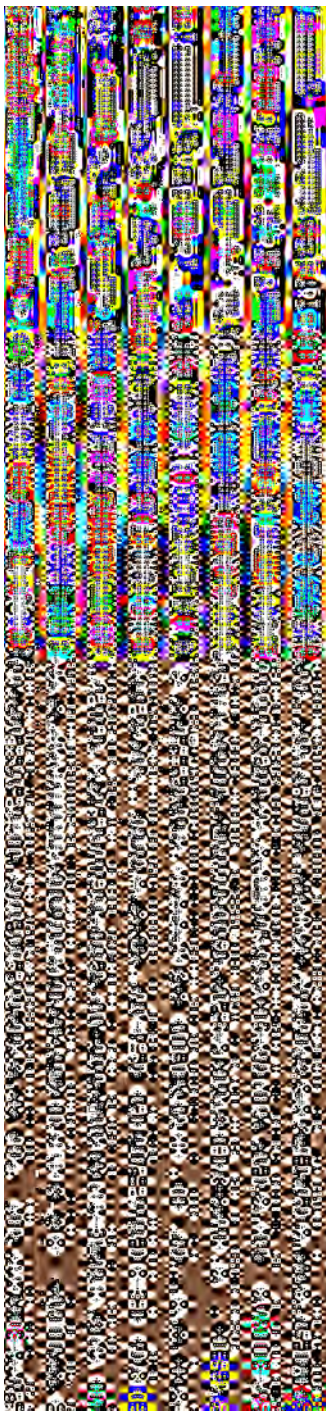
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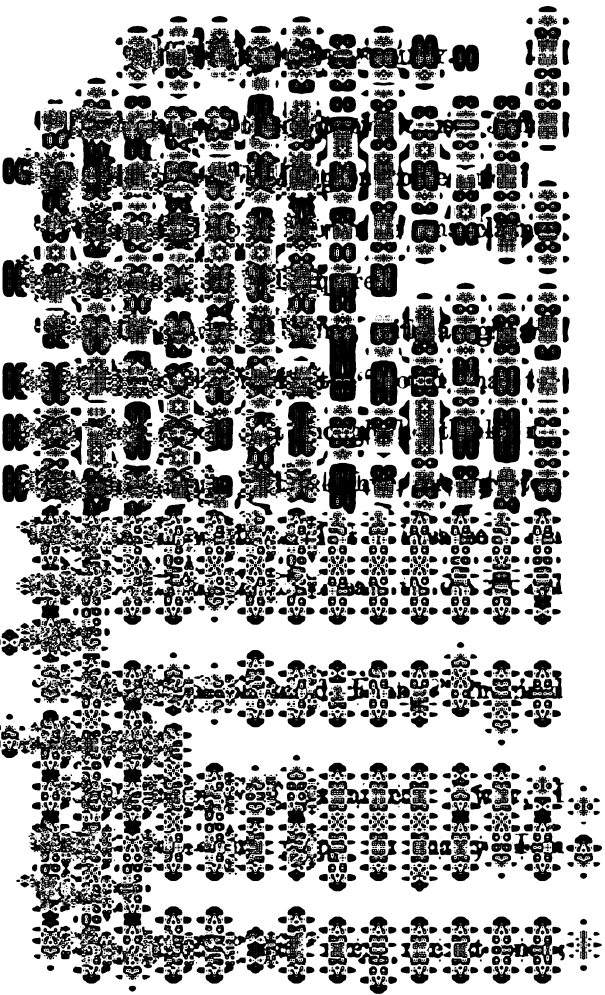


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DESBOROUGH FAMILY

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DESTOROUGH FAMIL

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1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general
 discussion of the problem. It is shown that the
 problem is of great importance in the theory of
 functions of a complex variable. The problem is
 solved in the case of a certain class of functions.
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FAMILY.

You were going to

delighted flutter for

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happy THAT SILLY

light, giddy laugh

slowly back from

the library, while

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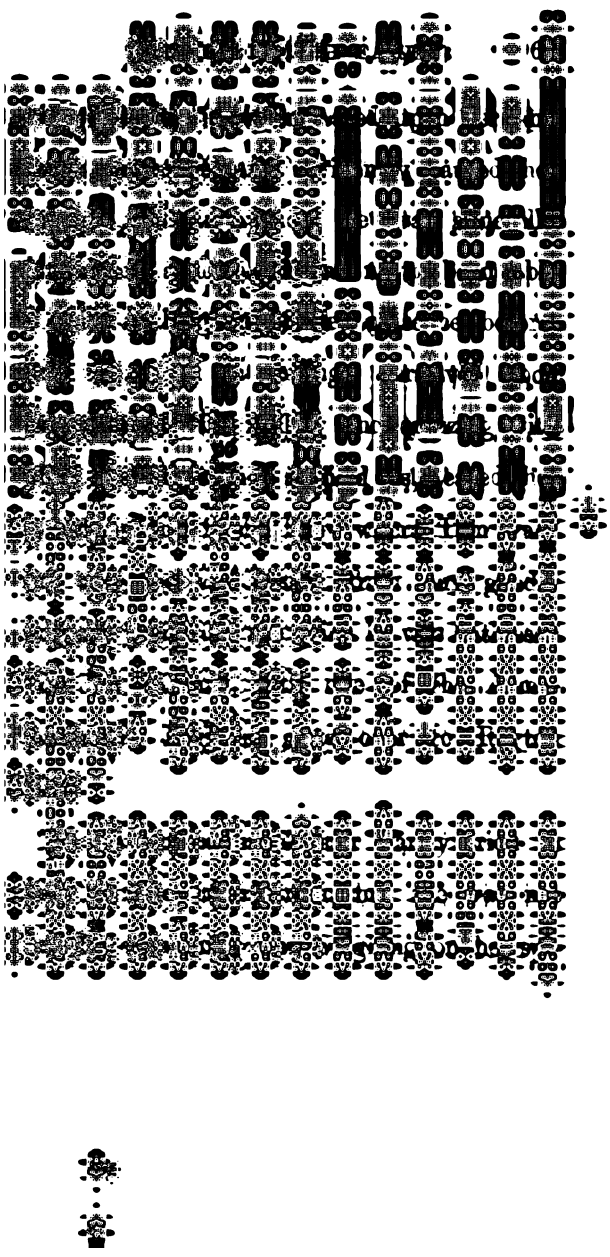
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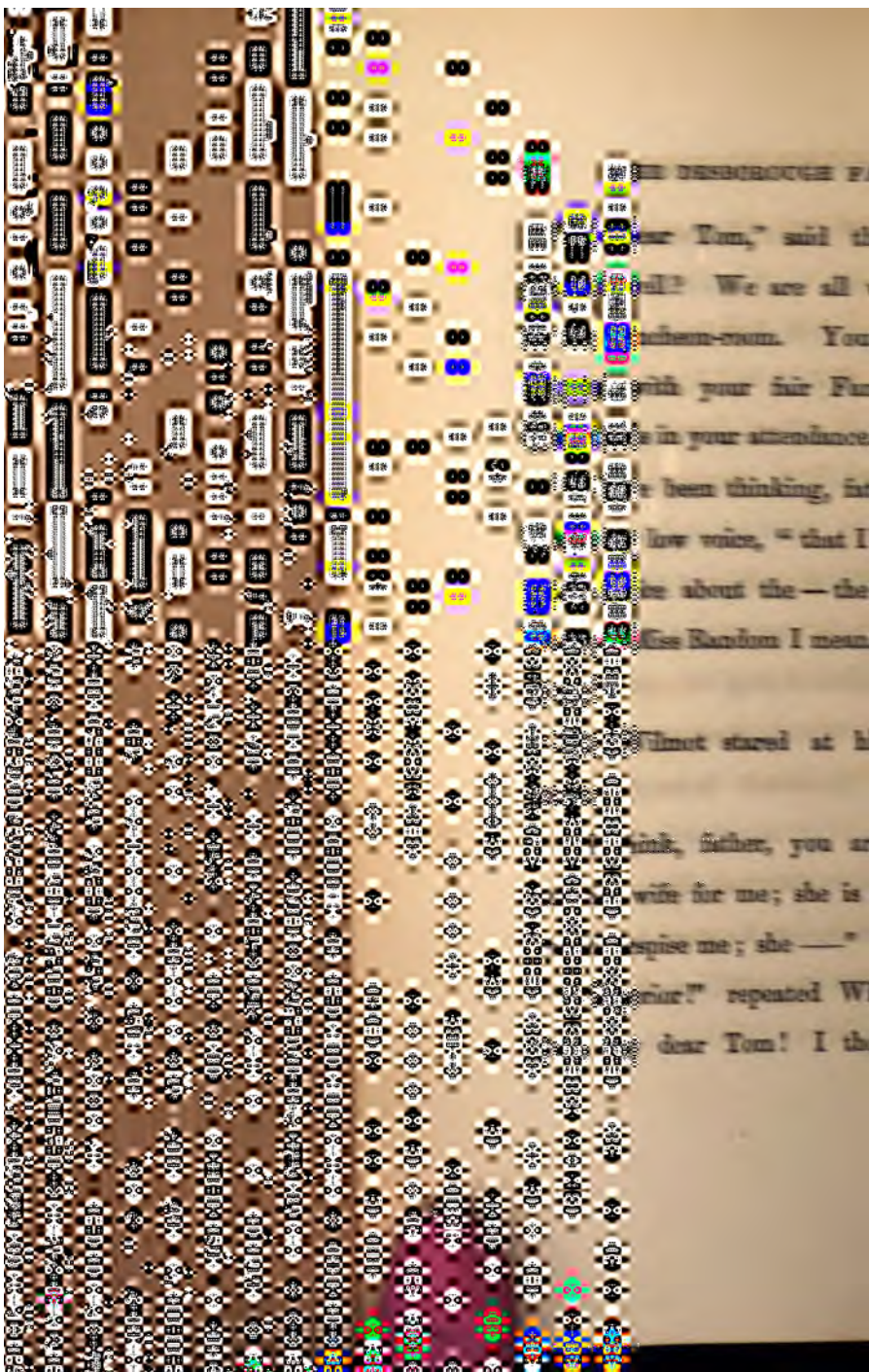


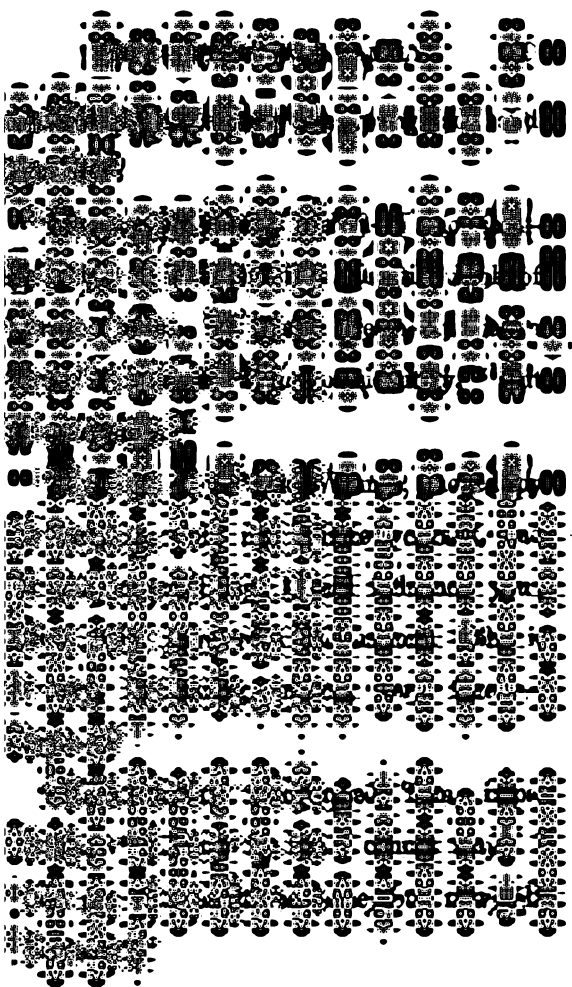
THE DESBOROUGH FA

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enced his "goûter."







FAMILY.

in please; but calm
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 luncheon."

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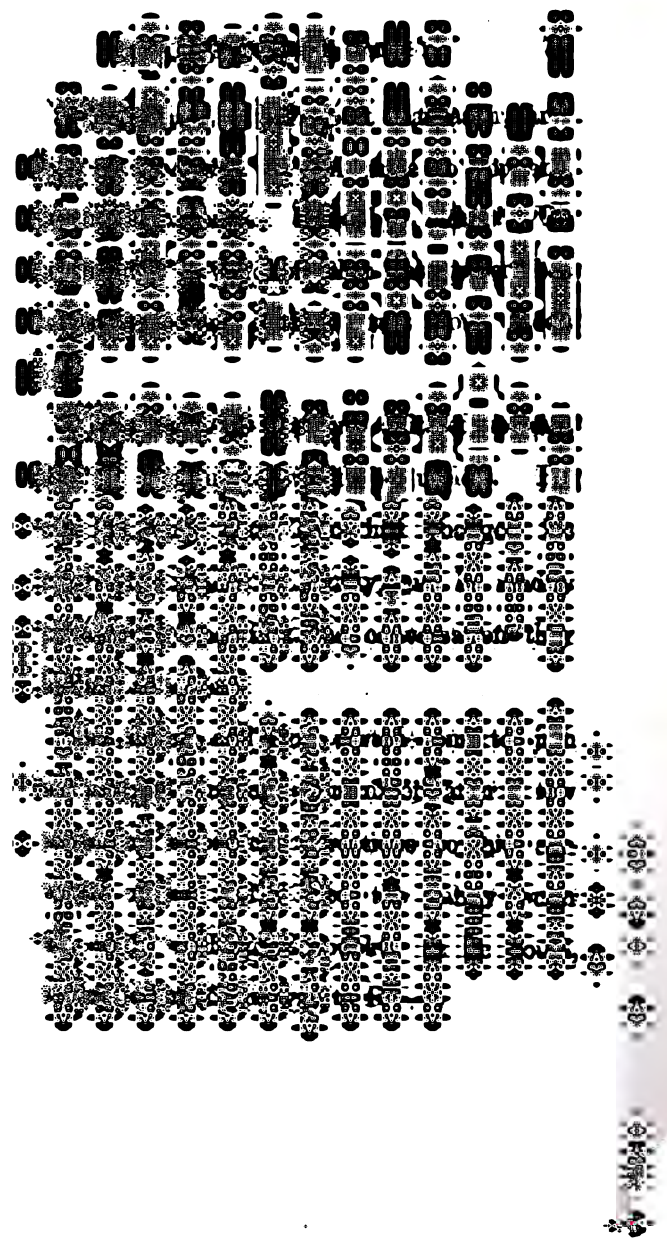
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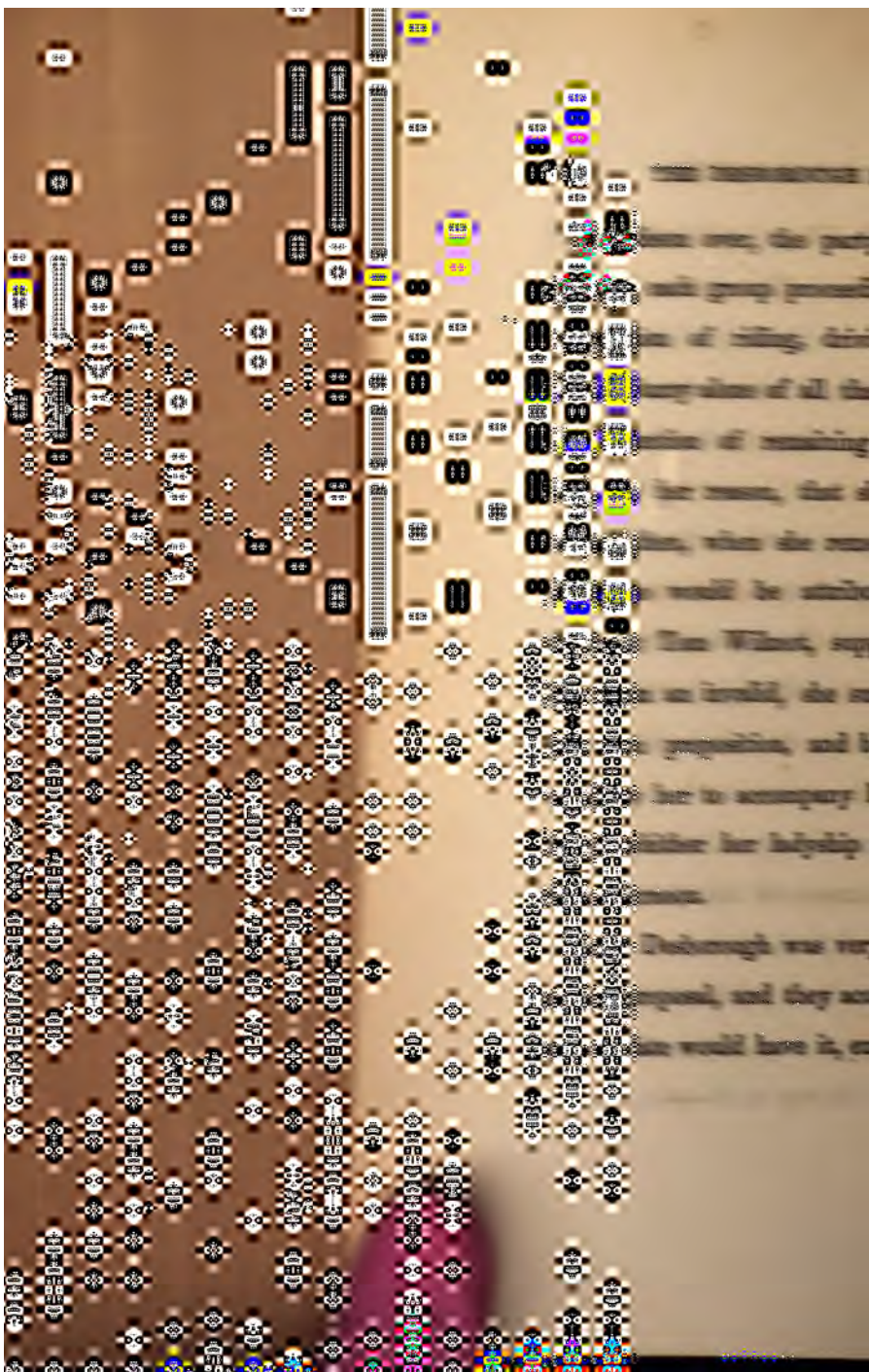
them with calmness

and take a chaise

my portmanteau;

follow you? where





minutes after Tom Wilmot had quitted it for Lancaster in Mr. Ullock's yellow post-chaise.

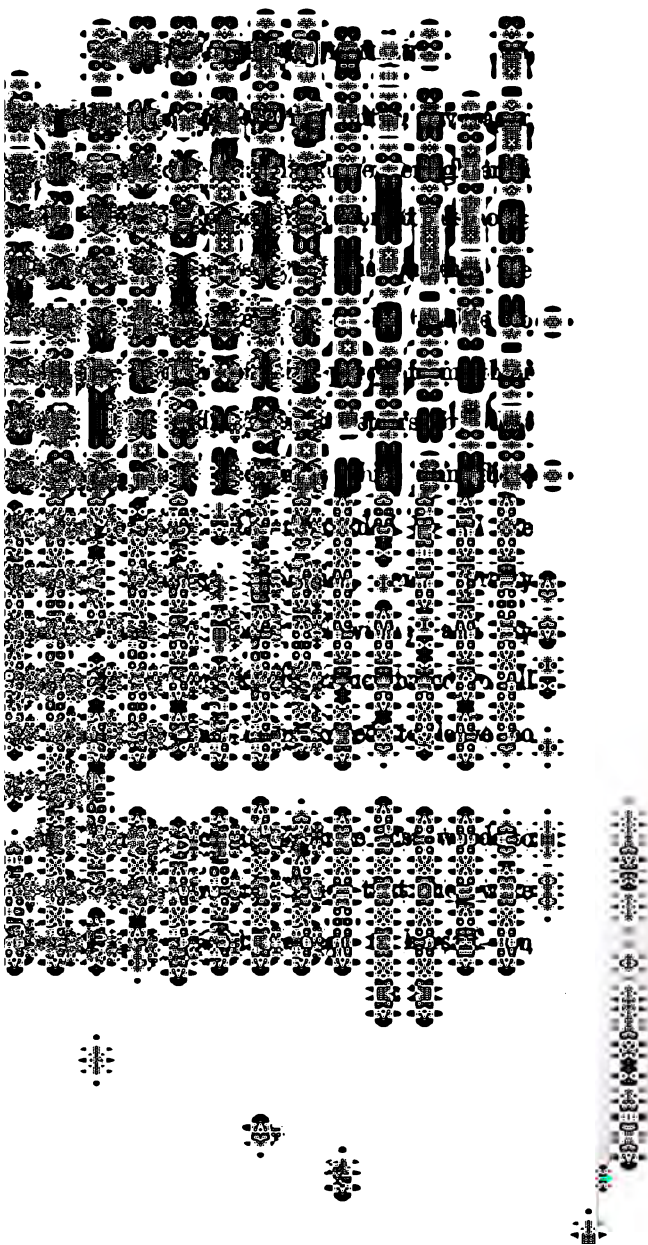
Unconscious of this, believing she had left him at the Cottage, regaining spirits from the delightful influence of the summer air, the warm sunshine, the lovely scenery around her, Fanny, during the period of her drive, and as she re-entered the gates of the Cottage, gradually became calmed and comforted. "Tom Wilmot's illness was only a slight indisposition"—thus she reasoned with herself—"her idle words would not be remembered, or punished, she trusted, as they deserved—how foolish she had been to dwell so sadly upon them, to allow such feelings of remorse to torment her!"

But short-lived were her calmness and her comfort. When the party assembled in the drawing-room previous to dinner, she again missed the object of her thoughts; every one was there but Tom Wilmot and Lord Newton; and when the door, opening, admitted his lordship alone, her heart sank at once.

His lordship entered with a letter in his hand; he was reading it as he entered, and exclaiming with wonder between each sentence—

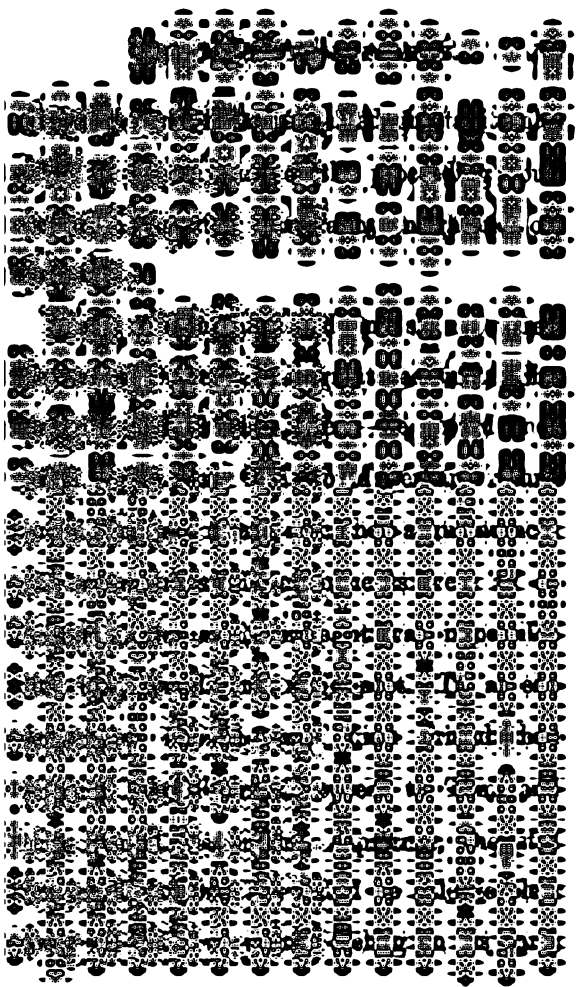
“Why, Wilmot, how is this? what has carried off Tom in this sudden way? Why, he said nothing about it at breakfast. What can it be?”

None, save the father and mother of the youth in question, had any idea as to what



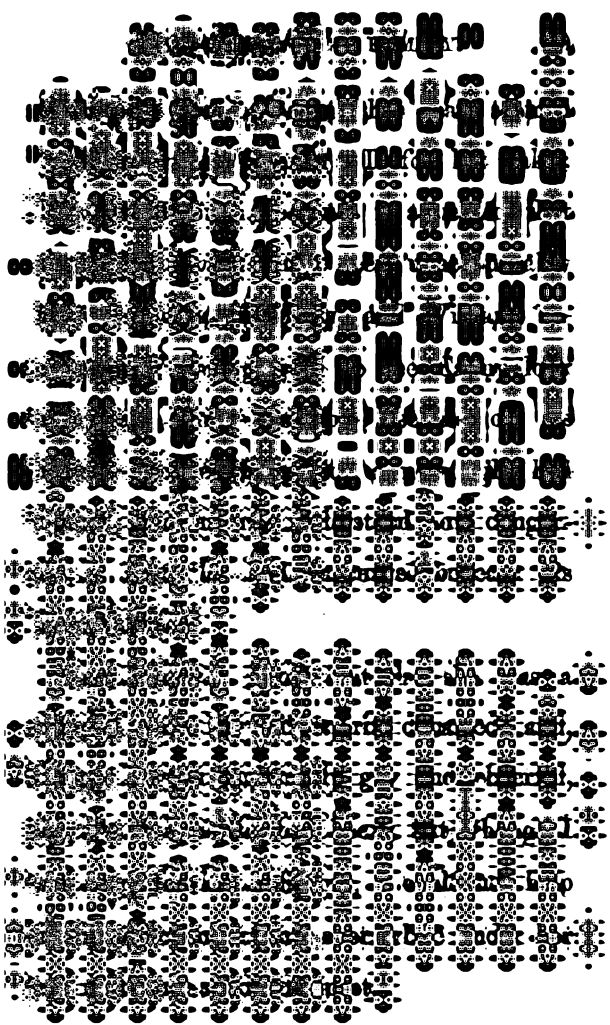
assurance of real regret—a promise of future faith. She was nervous, anxious, agitated; but she had the meaning of these words to cling to, and for many following days she thought of nothing else, mentally reading and re-reading that brief sentence, as though it were the volume of her fate.

In answer to Lord Newton's exclamations, Mr. and Mrs. Wilmot replied that they believed Tom's business in town referred to some college friend whose affairs required his presence. They did not inform their auditor that their son had departed long before "the friends" of whom he wrote had quitted the luncheon-room, and long before the afternoon post had arrived; and when, in the course of a few hours, this curious truth became privately



she knew she could rule him by a smile and a word; she was well aware of her power; a few weeks, a few months at most, and they would meet again, and all would again be happiness. But, at the close of the fortnight, a letter from Tom to his parents, dated from Naples, struck all these hopes, these idle dreams, to the earth. He had left town within a day or two of his reaching it from the Cottage; he was now in Italy; he intended to travel, he said, for years; he would see all worth seeing in Europe. The letter was written in a strain of sadness which was manifest even in the carefully-selected paragraphs read aloud by his mother to the, for the most part, deeply interested audience.

Yes; most were deeply interested in the



I think I see you now, Fanny—my pretty Fanny!—seated beside that open window, with the tender hues of twilight lingering on your sweet face; that face raised mournfully towards the purple sky; the dying light shining on that pure forehead, and on those parted ringlets of light-brown hair; while around the graceful outline of your figure, amid the folds of your flowing drapery, the gloom is deepening fast.

Such was Fanny's constant attitude, evening after evening. The apartment in which she sat was the small room with the glass folding-doors. Her companions were invariably the same: William, Julia, myself—attracted from the large drawing-room by the sound of Caroline's voice—assembled here to

CAROLINE'S SONG.

Though we are parted, think not I forget!

Memory is strong to linger and endure ;

And time and absence have been powerless yet

To make thine empire, or her own, less sure.

Seas roll between us ; but the same broad sun

At break of day pours light upon each rest ;

And the same shining moon, when day is done,

With soothing influence calms each parted breast.

Day after day, that rising sun shall see

My steadfast spirit—steadfast to its vow—

Keep through long lonely years its faith to thee.

'Tis all thy love may claim, or my poor fate bestow.

Far, far beyond that sun, beyond that sky,

There is a home for both when life is o'er ;

And in the silent grave, where both shall lie,

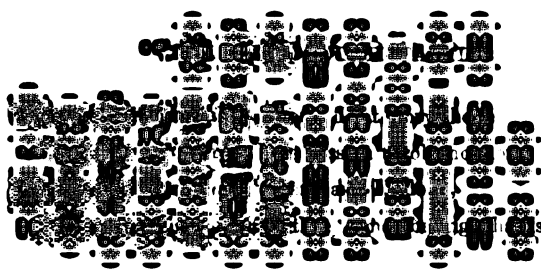
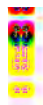
Ours will that union be we may not hope before.

Ours was the strange, wild rapture of a dream,

Whose passing glory left us deeper night ;

And I, content to muse upon that gleam,

Now, on mine onward way, seek for no further light.



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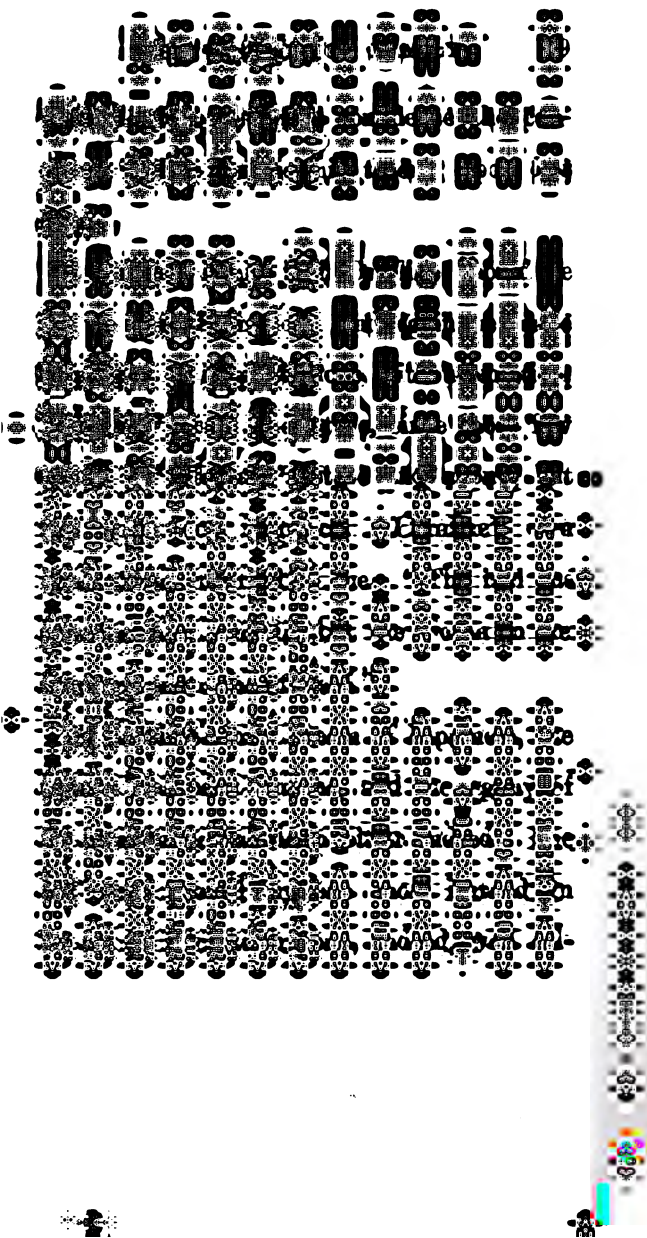
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instate himself in her good graces, and in the intimacy of Lady Desborough. It was impossible that they should not often meet; but it gave him pain, rather than pleasure, to observe that his coming and his going had become matters of perfect indifference in the quarter where they had once been regarded with such varied feelings of delight or dread.

He felt he had been too cautious; he had miscalculated; he had had little idea she would ever have become the distinguished character she was. "It would have been a good speculation," he mused, "to have married that girl. I saw Fumbel yesterday; he told me she has already realized a pretty sum. And then her connexions are so extremely good—I should have secured the *entrée* of many of

And her ladyship held up her hands in horror, forgetting, in the proud contemplation of Caroline's glory, all the past suffering—the not-to-be-mistaken suffering—that had fallen upon her young and innocent life; the aged heart, visible through that youthful glory; the lonely existence to which she had doomed herself,—and he the cause of all.

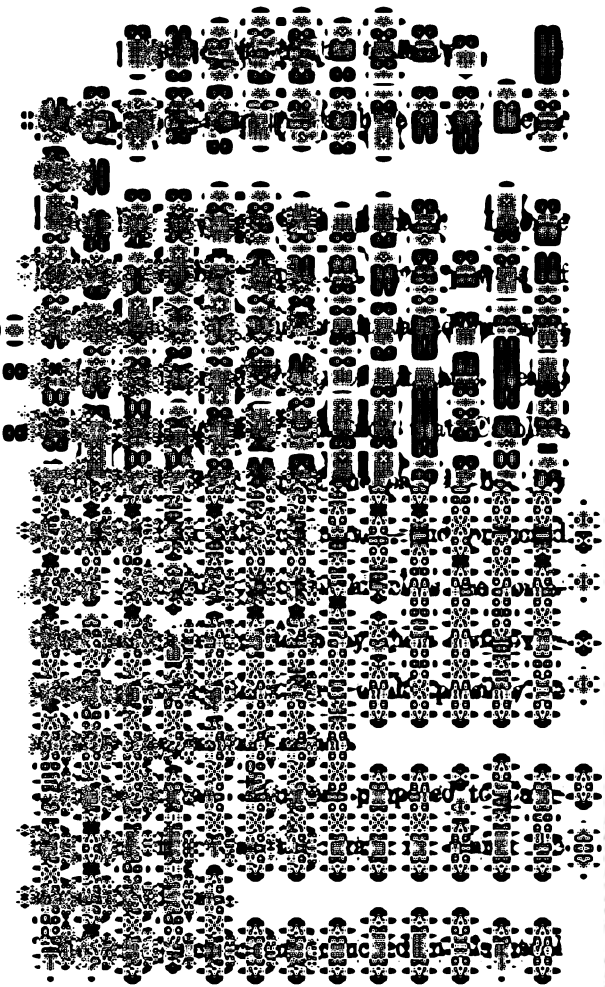
George Danvers resumed his attentions. I watched his efforts. I watched the struggle in the heart of Caroline. I could read her heart; I could mark the strange mixture of feelings that congregated there. I saw with terror the slumbering passion, awakened by the old well-remembered accents, the pleading tones, the affectionate words, sparkle in her eyes, flush her cheek, tremble on her lip. I



culated to win the love of a young romantic girl, ardently alive to the attractions of genius, and who believed him to be all that he could so well appear; and she had been deserted by him whom she had trusted implicitly—in whose protestations, or rather insinuations of attachment, she had confided without one shadow of doubt—whom she loved passionately—whose love had been the very spring of life to her.

And she had deemed him perfect, and he had deserted her, and she would not forget it.

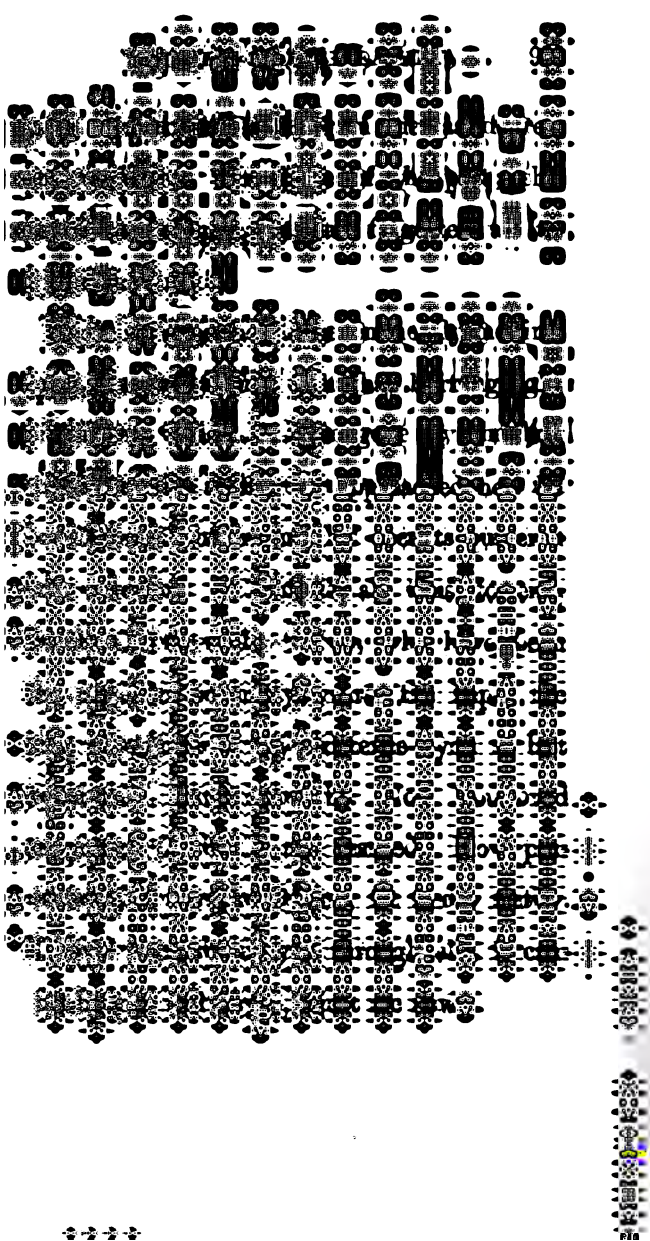
There was so much comprised in that sentence. Her pride, her self-respect—these had been so deeply wounded. She might have outlived the blight of disappointed af-



elegant language, saying he had something of importance to communicate to her, and requesting her to name a time when he might find her at home. She answered it verbally, merely replying that she should be at home the whole of the following morning.

She told me, with apparent unconcern, of this little incident. She also told William. William was in great terror; he feared that Danvers's soft tongue would prevail over Caroline's resolution, and that she would accept him.

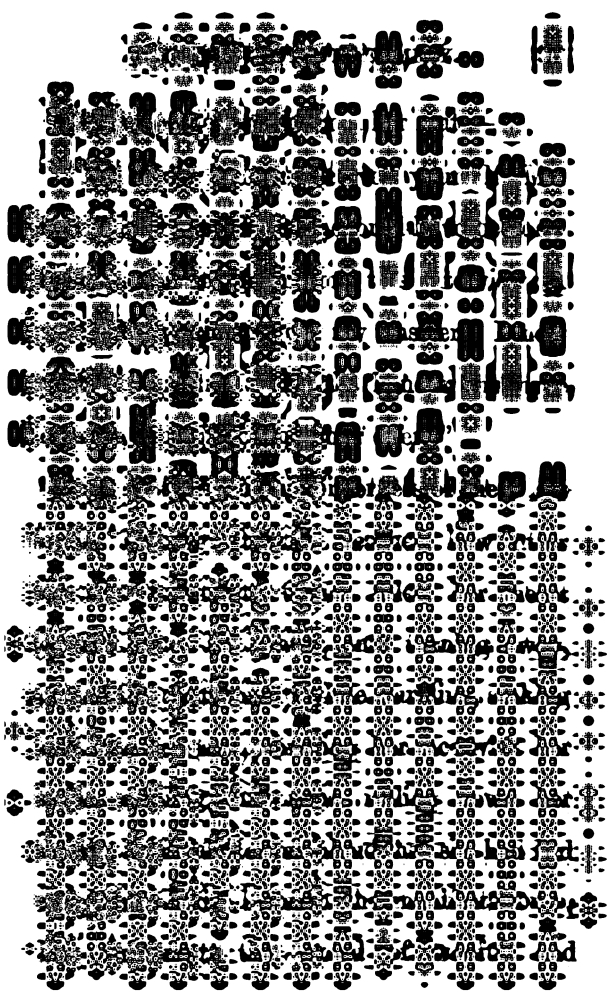
But, true to herself, she rejected scornfully the suit he proffered. She had pride enough to enable her to summon up an air of cold cutting surprise, as though his pro-



Indignation at his hypocrisy mastered all other feelings.

"To what do you allude, Mr. Danvers?" Caroline exclaimed. "I the hope, the aim, the guide, of *your* existence. I cannot reach your meaning. Surely our existences have been far enough apart; they have borne no reference towards each other."

"Then I have deceived myself most bitterly," humbly replied Danvers. "I thought my attentions had once been well received. I have ventured to hope. I have only lived for this moment—this moment, in which I am enabled by circumstances to offer you the heart and life, long, long your own only. Though, to the eyes of all beside, a secret, I thought *you* read the true history of my heart."



disturbing feelings, the anguish, the lingering love, the bitter, bitter shame, his words and presence excited.

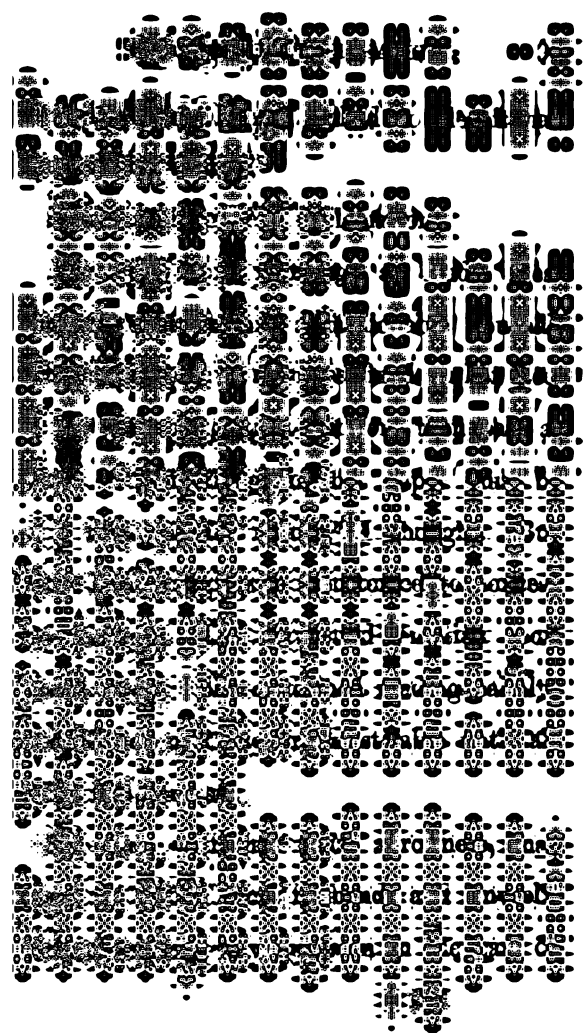
I confess that I was boy enough to take pleasure in waylaying Danvers on the stair after his hasty exit from this interview, and in detaining him for some seconds with trivial inquiries and remarks about nothing, that I might enjoy the spectacle of his confusion and rage. I spoke to him very civilly, but I allowed my face to proclaim, by its expression, my knowledge of, and my triumph in, his recent discomfiture. I felt that that moment repaid me for many a bitter hour. Every sigh, every tear, heaved and shed by Caroline, were to my mind so many deadly wrongs—the wronger. This revenged me for all I



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illness. We had also heard that the bishop, now in extreme old age and very infirm, had been ordered by his physicians to the mild sea-air of the Isle of Wight; therefore the palace of Stanwell was closed, otherwise we should certainly have been included among his guests. The papers mentioned the approaching festival: they named the great singers and players engaged as performers; they gave lists of patrons and patronesses; and the only comment we could make as we read was, "How very strange Mary does not invite us!"

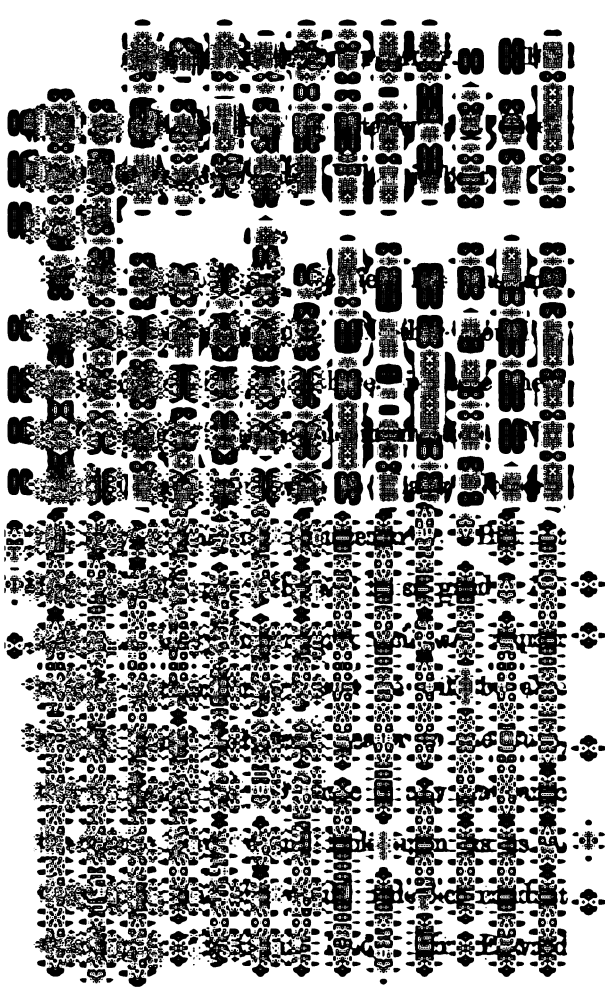
Then we all "compared notes." Each produced the last letter each had received from Mary. The dates of these were startlingly distant. "How long it is since we



the young ones; and then, after closing the door, she unfolded the cause of her alarm.

It consisted in a newspaper paragraph. These were the words:—"We understand that Mrs. Marston of Marston Hall has resigned her office as one of the lady patronesses of the ensuing festivities at Stanwell. Doubtless the fair mistress of this magnificent seat finds sufficient occupation at present in receiving and rewarding the *petits soirs* of that distinguished lady-killer and gallant officer Lord G——L——le."

"And now," exclaimed Lady Desborough, "what is to be done? Something *must* be done immediately. This, coupled with Mary's silence, creates most painful feelings in my mind. What must we do, Sir Edward?"

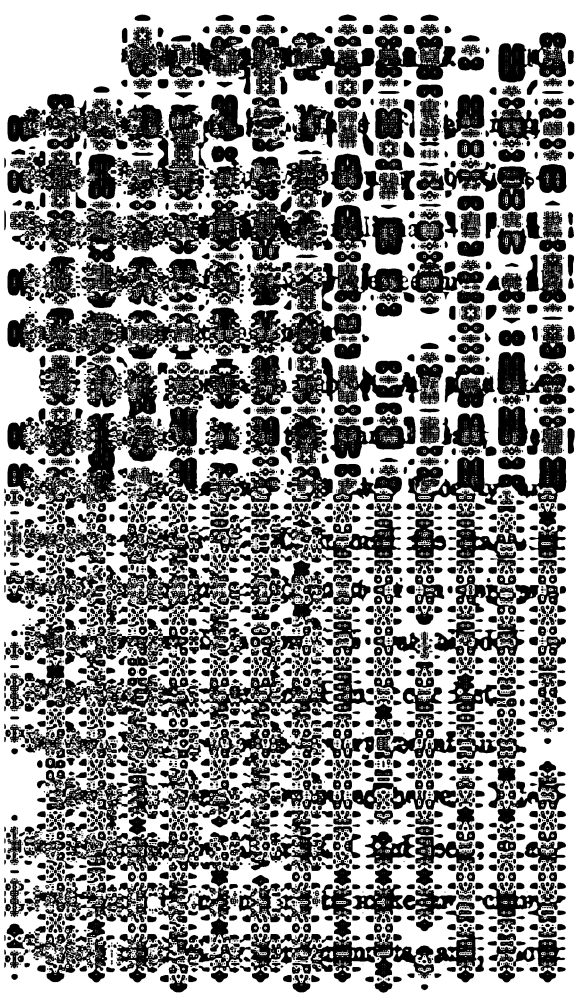


continued, with energy, "*I* had no hand in that match!"

"Pray God, rather," said Lady Desborough, seriously, "that those who made that match may not have cause to repent it. But no!" she added; "there can be no fear with those sweet children. No; I do not believe it possible."

The result of our consultation was, that the newspaper was thrown into the fire, and that I prepared to start that evening for Stanwell.

But before I quitted Brighton I visited the various clubs and reading-rooms in the town to which I had right of *entrée*; and I looked carefully through all the weekly papers, especially those who kindly took the trouble



all, to endeavour to keep all knowledge of the scandal afloat from the young cousins of its object.

I posted to town, and took the mail thence to Stanwell. Seated on the box, I endeavoured to extract a little gossip from the rubicund coachman. I mentioned the festival. I ascertained that it had commenced that morning, and on the following evening the first of the two balls would take place. Both were to be fancy balls; and ever since the festival had been established, the first had been considered the most select: it was attended by all the best country families, who vied with each other in the number of guests they collected for the occasion, and in the costliness and beauty of the costumes

they exhibited. I considered that Mary would infallibly be there, and I resolved to procure a dress of some sort in the town of Stanwell, and to remain *perdu* until I met her at the ball, leaving it to her to invite me to return with her to Stanwell, should she wish it. Continuing my chat with the coachman, I inquired what regiment was quartered at Stanwell. I learned that the 15th Hussars constituted the cavalry portion of the garrison, the Rifles the infantry.

“And, sur,” said the coachman, “there is as fine a young man in them Rifles as ever I clapped eyes on, and they do say he is a little too sweet upon that pretty Madam Marston, who is, as I opine, the sweetest and the prettiest lady in the whole county.”

So! it was common talk among all classes. This was woeful confirmation. With difficulty I concealed my emotion. I demanded the name of the "fine young man."

The coachman replied that he was Lord George Lyle.

Lord George Lyle! He then was the hero of this sad romance. My acquaintance with him was slight, but I knew him well by name and sight. He was very handsome, no profligate, young as Mary, with a mediocre intellect, but a character strongly marked by pride, and a person which combined the grace and beauty of an Antinous with an air of indescribable hauteur peculiarly his own.

Born of one of the oldest families in Eng-

land, whose highest boast was the purity of their long descent, he came nearer to the ideal meaning of the word "aristocratic" than any one I ever saw: in look, bearing, actions, character, there was a something high and noble running throughout all he said, or did, or appeared to do.

He was apparently a calm and silent person, and seemed to think that walking slowly, standing or sitting still, and answering when he was addressed, were quite sufficient exertions for him to undergo.

Yet this was chiefly in appearance; he was in reality passionate and headstrong, and unused to, and unable to bear, contradiction; he was a man of courage and generosity, had a great deal of what is called "pluck," and was a first-rate rider and sportsman.

"I am told," I said, "that Mrs. Marston has resigned her office as one of the lady patronesses: is it true?"

"Not as I've heard of, sir; but I did hear that the other lady patronesses would have been downright glad if she had."

I was now quite sure that I should meet her at the ball; having retained her office, she would not, I was certain, absent herself.

We reached Stanwell early next morning. I took up my quarters at the Angel; and, after breakfasting and resting awhile, I summoned the head waiter, and had a consultation with him as to the possibility of procuring anything in the shape of a decent fancy dress on so short a notice.

As luck would have it, there happened to

be at that time in the very hotel where I was located an individual who had brought from town a number of costumes, in the hope that the sale or hire of these would prove a successful speculation. How far it had succeeded I know not; but I do know that with little difficulty I procured from the speculator a very respectable "Earl of Essex" dress, moustache and imperial included.

It was a long time since I had been guilty of a similar piece of foolery; and as I decked myself out with the lace and satin, the mock diamonds and gilded collar of my costume, I sighed as I reflected upon the vanities of this life. I contrasted with bitter feelings the apparent gaiety and the real heaviness of the wearer of this, and doubtless of the wearers of most among the many similar apers who

would crowd that night into the assembly-rooms of Stanwell.

I did not proceed to the ball-room until past midnight. I wished to allow every one time to arrive before me.

Entering, my eyes fell at once upon the object they sought: Mary, standing nearly in the centre of the room, rose in all her brilliancy upon my sight.

There was a cessation in the dancing; and, owing to the adjournment of at least one half of the company into the adjoining supper-rooms, the saloon appeared comparatively empty; and while those remaining had gathered together in large groups towards the sides and upper part, Mary, supported by her husband and Lord George Lyle, occupied the centre.

The full light from one of the immense chandeliers poured down upon her figure. How beautiful—how very beautiful she was!

She was splendidly attired. Her costume was that of an eastern princess. Her flowing robes were of richest purple and of cloth of gold. The jewels she wore were of incalculable value. Her light hair, trimmed, after the fashion of the country whose dress she had adopted, with threads of gold, with countless braids of pearl, fell over her shoulders in tresses whose lustre mocked the brightness of the adorning gold and gems.

Round her fair arms, marking their full and perfect contour, and round her ivory throat, the diamonds, beneath the glow of light, were as stars of heaven. Upon her

brow the diadem was as a blazing sun. Never had I seen so glorious an apparition. Everything so gorgeous, so rich, yet all disposed with such perfect taste; and herself, so surpassingly lovely, fair, graceful as the lily, blooming as the rose!

“And you,” I half thought, half murmured —“you, beautiful Mary! are you, indeed, become the subject for coarse jests and ribald wit? and can it be that you are falling from your bright estate? Hath that heart, indeed, throbbed to aught save the holy wedded love and the dear kisses of your children? Can the lily be only outwardly pure—the rose tainted at the core?”

On one side of Mary was her husband; on the other, he whom I must call *her lover*;

but it was on the arm of the latter that she leaned.

Nothing could be better contrasted than her figure with that of Lord George. He wore the simple uniform of the Rifle Brigade; his tall form, in all its manly perfection, appearing to great advantage in the close-fitting and dark-green dress. Mary, with her imperial loveliness, dazzled while she enchanted; Lord George, calm and unadorned, claimed admiration at once by the mere unenhanced graces of his noble person and princely bearing.

Another contrast was presented by Marston. He was clad in the uniform of Lord Lieutenant of the county. It was not becoming to him; his small, almost mean figure, his undignified and ungainly bearing, were so very different from those of Lord George Lyle.

In the expression of his face I detected new meanings lurking, and there was a watchfulness in his manner, as though he too were aware of the reports about his wife, and was anxiously observing her conduct and that of the company around. His voice occasionally joined in conversation with his companions; occasionally he stole a furtive glance at their countenances; more frequently his look wandered uneasily towards the groups scattered through the ball-room, and, if his eyes met those of any one near him, they would be suddenly averted.

Wherever his wife and her friend moved, step by step he accompanied them. It was impossible to imagine Marston in the character of a guardian angel; and, as I watched them, a strange idea occurred to my mind: I imagined him a demon, conducting two lovely and mis-

guided souls to ruin and condemnation. Sometimes a sudden flush that crossed his pale face, bearing with it an expression of hate strangely mingled with triumph, seemed to favour this idea. But this look was often succeeded by one full of such profound melancholy, I could not but pity him.

They advanced towards the door at which I had entered, and near which I still continued lingering. As they approached, I could perceive that Mary was changed since we had last met; even more beautiful, yet with less repose—more of passion, of excitement—more of fire in the blue eyes, of hectic on the cheek, such as had not been before.

They continued moving towards the entrance. As they proceeded, the various

groups around seemed all agitated by one desire—that of avoiding any contact with them. I could perceive that some ladies passed them with averted heads, others bowed coldly, while some fairly turned their backs.

Thus an avenue was opened for them as they descended the room, down which they paced; the light from the lustres suspended overhead now glowing upon Mary's majestic and gem-crowned form—then, as she passed from beneath each, falling upon the crowd that closed instantly behind her path, lighting up faces whose varying expressions of envy, scorn, pity, sorrow, indignation, were, with their mute language, to me as terrible as would have been ten thousand voices shouting forth our overwhelming shame.

Confused, horror-stricken, I could not then meet Mary. I suffered her to pass the corner where I stood unobserved; I then fell in with the crowd, now moving universally to the supper-rooms, and followed her thither.

Her companions led her to the head of the table, where a few vacant seats had been left by the retirement of some of the dowagers who had been first placed there. She seated herself, and immediately, as if by magic, the upper part of the table was deserted by every member of the fair sex, and none save gentlemen remained in her neighbourhood.

It was at this moment that a figure just before me attracted my attention. I heard it heave a deep and bitter sigh—one that seemed wrung from the heart by some intense grief.

I turned my looks towards the quarter whence this sigh proceeded.

A tall, slender form—whose shape and air seemed not unknown to me, but whose figure was well concealed by the shrouding dress of a monk, and whose features were partially shaded by the cowl, partially covered by a long and ample beard—was gazing with a look of fixed sadness upon the group of which Mary was the centre. Evidently, his sigh was for her. I watched his face intently. I thought I recognised the small portion of features permitted to be seen, especially the full, clear eye, whose beams were now dimmed by a sadness unutterable.

I soon, however, lost sight of the monk; and having wearied myself in vain for some

moments in trying to recall a more distinct remembrance of the countenance, which I felt sure I had seen at other times and under different circumstances, I quitted the unprofitable task in despair; and, making my way up the supper-room, paused not until I could touch the back of Mary's chair, when, leaning over it, I addressed her as "Mary!"

She recognised my voice at once; she started, alas! "like a guilty thing."

"Cousin John!—why, in the name of fortune, where have *you* sprung from?"

"I came from Brighton," I replied, as I seated myself beside her. "I wished to make one at this gay ball; and, moreover, we have all been quite anxious about you"—(here she started again, and coloured)—"it is so long

since we have heard from you. We all fully expected an invitation to Marston Hall, Mary."

"I did ask my aunt and cousins, I know, when they were here last year. I perfectly remember it. Why did they not come? and why have you not come to our house? But you have not seen Marston. Marston, here is my cousin, Mr. Greville; and, John, allow me to introduce you to Lord George Lyle."

"I believe I have the pleasure of Mr. Greville's acquaintance," said Lord George, while Marston saluted me in the ordinary terms. The situation of each was somewhat awkward. Mary talked incessantly and nervously. Lord George was, as usual, silent, and apparently unconcerned; Marston gloomily

reserved; I, attempting to appear perfectly unembarrassed, felt agitated in the extreme; and doubtless this agitation would impart something unusual to my manner, which Mary, her husband, and her lover, all of whom must have been fully aware of the state of public feeling towards them, would not fail to remark.

While seated by Mary, and during our conversation, I continually looked around in search of the monk, but I never saw him again; and when I inquired of my companions whether they had remarked this character, they all replied in the negative.

Mary accepted my arm back into the ball-room. While on our transit, we necessarily encountered many individuals to whom she was known, and some with whom

I had become acquainted during former visits to Stanwell or the neighbourhood. These appeared to me to shun her less; nay, in a few cases, to greet her with even cordiality. Perhaps my presence, perhaps her separation from the companion of her folly, might have wrought this change.

However it was, I felt deeply humiliated when I perceived how eager Mary was to return these salutations, how pleased she seemed with this scanty attention, how her bright proud spirit had become bowed by the consciousness of indiscretion and of neglect—of deserved neglect.

We passed round the rooms. Many stopped to greet me, and to inquire after Lady Desborough. Among these were the Nollertons. The duchess, speaking to me of my

cousin Jane, concluded some kind messages she sent to her with these words:—"And tell Lady Desborough we want her very much in this part of the world; *tell her the sooner she comes the better.*" And with a friendly smile to me, a bow to Mary, her grace passed on.

The emphasis laid upon the last sentence of her communication did not escape me, and, as I felt Mary's arm tremble as it rested on mine, I conclude it did not escape her either.

Lady Anne, escorted by one of her ten thousand admirers, came next. She stopped to hail me with a cordial welcome; but her first inquiries were not for Lady Desborough, but for Caroline, for Julia, for William: yet, when we parted, she seemed to forget all,

save her pity for the alighted Mary; she extended her hand to her, and a few kind words fell from her lips; her generous heart could bleed even over

“an erring sister’s shame.”

Scarce half an hour had elapsed since we quitted the supper-room, but Mary appeared to think it an age. I saw her eye begin to wander around in search of some beloved object; I saw the flush fade from her cheek, and I remarked, as she grew pale and weary-looking, how much thinner her face had become since the time when we had last met: then, as Lyle approached her, I saw the joy, the rapture return, lighting up her countenance with a transcendent beauty.

He came to claim her for a waltz. Another moment she was floating through the fairy

mazes of the dance, the loveliest of the lovely; while, gazing at her from a dark and distant corner, Marston, his pale visage darkened by an expression of almost fiendlike malignity, seemed to exult in the prospect whose contemplation wrung tears from my eyes that were as tears of blood.

Sick at heart, I quitted the gay scene, and returned to the hotel. I had declined returning with Mary to Marston Hall, and had promised to call there the following day before I quitted Stanwell, which, I informed her, I was under the necessity of doing that morning.

Ascending the staircase to my room in the Angel, I passed an open door. On a small table near it, and within an apartment, I saw the robes and cowl of the monk, and lying

on these the false beard he had worn. The room was brilliantly lighted, and opposite to the door was a mirror: within this I caught the reflection of a male figure, whose clasped hands and bowed-down head gave evidence of some deep emotion, or of some great inward struggle.

Hearing my step upon the stairs, the figure raised itself; the light fell full upon its features—they were those of Marmaduke Lincoln.

The mystery of the monk was explained. It was Marmaduke Lincoln. He, too, had heard the damning whispers; he, too, was mourning over the sad evidence of their truth. Without hesitation I entered; he recognised me at once, and a few words explained the cause of this strange meeting.

I grieved deeply over all that I had seen; I felt most keenly the shame, the disgrace; I would have given all that I possessed to rescue Mary from the gulf into which she was plunging, to wipe from her name and fame the stain that had already fallen upon them; but yet my feelings were as a feather in the balance compared with those that agitated Lincoln. It was some time before he became sufficiently calm to talk rationally on this painful subject.

“Greville,” he at last said, “these are the consequences of a marriage without love. To what a terrible end is their union hastening! Marston exults in the prospect of freedom; Mary, given up to the rapture of a first passion, forgets in her infatuation all the ties

that hold her to the path of honour. Her very children are as nothing to this love!

"And it is love," he continued. "Mary is no coquette; but she never loved her husband. The moment has arrived when she feels the force of real feelings. All, all is falling before this insane abandonment, this love, not less sincere, not less heartfelt, than it is mad and guilty. Oh!" he exclaimed, wildly, and flinging his arms upwards, "I acknowledge my sin; I *have* acknowledged it, with tears and agony. Punish me as THOU wilt, but not through *her*!"

"Lincoln," I said, "what do you mean? In what have you erred? Rouse yourself; you have influence both with Mary and Marton: try to save her!"

"*I cannot,*" he replied, turning his death-like countenance upon me; "*it is now too late.*"

"But, surely," I said, "though Mary is so infatuated, Marston may yet be roused to a sense of the impending danger. Will not his affection for his children, his regard for the honour of his name, force him to some measures that might prevent the continuation of this disgraceful connexion, and the scandal it excites?"

"I have seen Marston," answered Marmaduke, more calmly, "and I have used every argument with him; but he is blind to all save his own revenge and liberation. His worst passions are roused. He hates his wife; he knows himself despised by her: he has watched this affair from its commence-

ment: he, by coldness, by neglect, by taunts, is urging Mary to the final step. He would crush her to the earth. He will rejoice in the fearful spectacle of her degradation, unheeding the double obloquy that shall descend upon his own head, of the legacy of shame that shall be the portion of his children for evermore. I have not seen Mary," he continued, after a pause; "I could not meet her now; but I have had an interview with Marston. I have entreated him to interfere; to appeal to Mary's better feeling; to offer her the love of a husband; to demand hers in return; to speak to her with firmness, yet with affection; to take her to a protecting, a forgiving heart. I know her disposition: she is not proof against kindness. But he refuses. 'No!' he says; 'if my wife

can. forget her station, no words from me shall strive to call her back. I will not stoop to plead for my own right; I will not force my unwelcome love upon her.'

"But, Greville, he does not love her; he never did. I have been for many years the recipient of his dreams and hopes. Long, long ago, I knew of his attachment to Lady Anne Grantley. I have listened to the outpourings of his sincere love for her. He has often declared he would offer to her, and that, if she rejected his proposals, he would wed no other. His nature is obstinate, recurring; his mind is narrow; with him a sullen adherence, not worthy of the name of constancy, is the first instinct of his character. Few are, and few have been, his attachments, but they are fixed; and whether

well-bestowed or ill-bestowed, it matters not; he has not courage or strength of mind enough to shake off old predilections, even though they may have become burdensome to him. He has not energy sufficient to rouse himself to the possession of the actual happiness that might be his.

“ He allowed himself to be persuaded into a match which he disliked ; he took to his bosom a wife he knew he loved not, knowing that he loved another. For a few brief days, perhaps for a few brief weeks, he fancied he might be happy, but the illusion soon vanished. His first love had been, and is still, too strong; it closed his heart against all others; it blinded his eyes to all other perfections. Soon, also, came the discovery that the wife for whom he had sacrificed that first love thought

little of him, had her pleasures and her hopes apart from him, or thought of him but to pity or despise him. His children too, whom he really regards with true parental tenderness, they cling to their beautiful, fascinating mother. She has all their artless affection—hers without an effort; he lavishes fondness upon them, yet cannot fail to perceive how small is the tribute it exacts from them to what they so freely bestow upon her. He is jealous even of their love.

“Now, enraged by her contempt, hating the yoke that binds him to her, furious with jealous anger as he watches her with her too-evident admirer, he has vowed her destruction. He is using every means to drive her to the consummation of his own and her dishonour; and there are many who partly guess his intention. The

countenance he affords, by his continual public presence, to the attentions offered by Lyle to his wife, is already the cause of much scandal and surmising. How all will end, God only knows! I have striven, but in vain; I cannot avert—would that I might be spared the pain of witnessing—the issue! would that I had died ere the knowledge of this time reached me!”

“And do you anticipate so fearful a catastrophe?” I inquired, more for the sake of breaking the pause that followed Marmaduke’s concluding words, than from any doubt I had as to the extent of his dread.

“I fear the worst,” he answered, “and can think but of one plan that might rescue Mary. I would have you return without delay to Brighton, and entreat Lady Desborough to

hasten hither with all speed. She can do more than we could do; we cannot address Mary upon such a subject, but Lady Desborough has been as a mother to her, and she loves her as such. This is our last hope; this may prevail. The very sight of her aunt will recall all the innocent and happy hours of childhood, of her bright girlhood, the early days of her proud maternal bliss. She will not withstand these remembrances."

Marmaduke's emotion stopped his utterance. I could not have imagined him feeling so deeply for the sufferings of others. His agitation differed so much from the calm, pitying, supporting sympathy I should have fancied him bestowing; it partook of a wildness, an incoherence. His look, his accents, his heaving breast implied so terrible a load of

anguish at his heart; his words, too, were somewhat those of self-reproach. What could all this mean?

His project exactly tallied with my own ideas. I felt it would be criminal to remain one moment longer without taking active steps in the matter; and, without further parley, I ordered a post-chaise and four to be got ready immediately. After divesting myself of my "silk attire" and moustachios, I entered the straw-carpeted vehicle, and gave the word for starting.

Marmaduke's road home lay part of the way in my direction, and I took him as far as I could. During the time we were together, we spoke of nothing but the one subject uppermost in both our minds. He told me that he, also alarmed by a newspaper

paragraph, had made inquiries which confirmed his fears as to its truth, and had come down to Stanwell with the same intentions as myself; as also with the object of exerting his influence over Marston, if he found such conduct necessary.

But he saw at once that his influence, great as it had been and was, was nothing compared to the strength of Marston's own passions and determination. He had quitted Marston Hall without a hope of being able to exert himself to any good purpose. He had gone to the ball only, as he said, "that he might see her once more—but *once more*;" and the passion, the intense grief, that dwelt in the utterance of these words, seemed to me to reveal a sad and strange secret.

We parted; and the evening found me at Brighton.

Now comes a recital which I would fain have appeared to forget—fain have omitted; but I have pledged myself to recount the true history of the fates of my cousins, and I must keep my word.

“Ill news,” they say, “fly apace.” The second morning after my return, just as Lady Desborough was at the point of entering her travelling-carriage, which, ready packed and supplied with four fast horses, waited to convey her to Marston Hall, William—who was aware of the whole affair—who had seen all the allusions in the public prints, and had aided us effectually in keeping the knowledge we wished concealed from the girls—was seen

hurrying up the street towards us. I was handing Jane into the carriage. She paused. "It is William," she said: "he is coming to wish me good by." (He was not at that time living in the same house with his family.) He came; but not to say good by.

"It is too late, mother!" he exclaimed. "You must remain. Mary has *eloped with Lyle!*"

How William had learned his information, whether from the papers or from a letter, I cannot now remember; but it was true.

Another day, and the papers teemed with circumstantial accounts of "this disgraceful affair!" The coquetry of the lady, the profligacy of the lover, the heartrending grief of the bereaved husband, were depicted in most forcible terms; the probable amount of

damages discussed; the possibility of a divorce indirectly questioned; the names, ages, pedigrees, connexions, fortunes of the various parties concerned, given at full length.

I shall not dwell upon Lady Desborough's sorrow and vexation, or attempt to depict the strange mixture of feelings she manifested as the calamity presented itself in its different shapes to her. Now she thought of the stain thrown upon her chaperonage; now of the injury it might inflict upon her guileless daughter and nieces. Then she worried herself with thinking what course she had best pursue; then, her natural affection overpowering all else, she thought only of Mary, and wept bitter tears over all the misery, the shame, the lasting remorse, she had prepared for herself.

Neither shall I attempt to describe the sorrow of Julia, of Fanny, of Caroline, nor the sterner grief of Sir Edward and William; but I must turn to the depicting of a sadder picture yet, the agony of Lady Norton—she who was so mournful a widow, so miserable a mother!

Lady Desborough had written to Lady Norton, offering her such condolence as might be offered. Her answer by return of post was marked by a singular firmness and resignation; the few sentences were clearly and well expressed; the mind, which, beneath the previous great sorrow of her life, had sometimes almost sunk to imbecility, seemed to rouse itself to meet this blow, and to gain strength to bear this new affliction. Lady Desborough had offered to visit her, or in-

vited her to join them at Holmesley, but she declined both, yet wished, she said, to see some member of the family—William, Sir Edward, myself—any one who might be able or willing to spare her an hour's conversation. There were many particulars, she said, she was anxious to inquire into.

On this summons, Sir Edward and myself started to attend her. Norton Grange was little more than half a day's journey from Holmesley, whither we had all proceeded from Brighton. It was near the town of C—; and we agreed to leave our carriage there, walk to Norton Grange, and return to C—to dine, and, should Sir Edward feel fatigued, to sleep there.

We were at first refused admittance to the Grange, but, on sending in our cards, the

denial was withdrawn ; we were ushered into a large gloomy drawing-room, where we found Lady Norton.

The Grange is a huge Elizabethan mansion, situated in a fine park ; it is built of dark-red brick, faced with white stone ; the heavy balustrades and richly-carved window-sills and gables of the same ; the windows are somewhat small in comparison to those which it is the fashion to insert in modern houses, in many the old diamond-paned casements are preserved.

You enter through a lofty portal, to which you ascend by a flight of marble steps ; the hall is of immense size, lighted by tall windows on one side, and somewhat deep in the wall ; many of them are of stained glass ; through these the sunlight, falling on the chequered

marble floor, stains it with bright hues—purple, crimson, azure, gold; in niches between each casement, and all around the hall, are placed figures in ancient armour, grim knights, with visor closed and unsheathed swords, as ready for the combat; above their heads hang the scutcheons or the banners of their race. At either end of the hall a mighty chimney spreads its wide arms, having no grate, but great dogs in brass, which receive the huge fagots that during the winter blaze throughout the day. Above the carved mantelpiece are hung polished arms and trophies of the chase. Above each of the many doors that open into the hall is a picture of some mighty hunt, perhaps from the brush of Rubens or of Snyders. The window-seats, the tables, chairs, and benches are all of carved wood.

From this hall we passed into an ante-room, entirely hung round with paintings, and thence into the drawing-room, where we found Lady Norton.

She was changed indeed. Twenty years seemed added to her age since I had last seen her. Her golden hair was visibly streaked with white; her rich dress was disordered; she looked as though she had neither eat, nor slept, nor rested, since she had heard the sad, woeful news.

She was pacing the room as we entered. She welcomed us with calmness, but it seemed the calmness of despair. At her desire we seated ourselves; but she resumed her restless paces, and, as she passed us, would occasionally stop to ask some question, and, having received the answer, would again turn away.

She appeared to think her child had been unjustly treated—married too young to one she scarcely knew, and could not love, and by him purposely exposed to dangers he should have been the one to avert. Yet ever as she appeared upon the point of saying this, of denouncing the authors of that marriage, and of its subsequent misery and guilt, the remembrance would occur to her that *her* father had been the moving spirit of all. That thought paralysed her tongue as words of anger or reproach would rise. Undefined purposes and wishes seemed to haunt her. She sometimes spoke of revenging her child; then, with bitter wailings, she would acknowledge her own powerlessness, yet she never appeared to think how really guilty, how miserably guilty, that child was.

Turning to Sir Edward, she said—"Has not my life been indeed a wretched one? cannot you recall me in my youth? am I not changed since that time? what have I not suffered since those days!"

Then the conversation (if conversation it might be called) turned upon herself. She was led to speak of her own life. At last, she told us her own mysterious long-hidden tale.

"I was the favourite child," she said, "of my father. He doted upon me. Until I was twenty I cannot recall one word or act of his which crossed me in any wish or whim. I believed it would always be so. I was young, beautiful, gay, admired, spoiled, petted. I had never known a sorrow or a disappointment. My father saw a great deal of company, both

at Stanwell and in town. My mother died when I was an infant, and, in consequence, the duties of presiding over his household had early been allotted to me. I had already, before the period I have spoken of, received much attention and some few proposals. I had acted in these affairs precisely as my inclination led me. I had, it is true, informed my father of these offers, and had received his assent to my refusal of them.

“ I fancied it would be always the same ; and little thought how his will, when its object was once fixed upon, could compel all things to its subjection.

“ It was about this time that I first became acquainted with Henry Ormsby, an orphan of a respectable country family, a very few years older than myself.

“I have said that he was an orphan, but yet was not quite alone in the world; he had a brother, serving in India, and one gentle devoted sister.

“They were poor; they resided together in a small cottage in the neighbourhood of Stanwell, he and his sister. The sister, not beautiful, not wealthy, not blessed with the gifts of genius, was little noticed; Henry, handsome, remarkable for talent, full of energy and ambition, was a universal favourite.

“He was destined for the church; for which profession his ardent and enthusiastic disposition, his high principles, blameless conduct, and natural eloquence seemed peculiarly to fit him. He was graduating at Oxford, and it was during one of the vacations that we first met. These vacations were always

spent in the humble dwelling near Stanwell with his quiet sister; but while she remained neglected and contented at home, he was continually in society, especially that of the dean and prebendaries, who had most of them been personal acquaintances of his father, and who were always glad to adorn their various entertainments by the presence of so elegant and promising a young man.

“ My father also noticed him. Henry Ormsby was a gentleman by descent, though not of noble birth or highly connected; but he was even more—he was a gentleman by nature; and my father, so fastidious, so polished, so learned, could appreciate his taste, talents, and acquirements.

“ We met continually; for months the flames burnt, hidden in our hearts, hidden from each

other, but, the hour of parting revealed the mutual secret. Henry avowed his love, but his passion was equalled by his despair; he saw how great was the gulf between us; he never even spoke of hope.

“ But I, unaccustomed to contradiction, relying on my father’s extreme indulgence towards me, could not imagine the possibility of his refusing me any request, far less one so intimately connected with my happiness.

“ I encouraged Henry. My confidence, my hopes, communicated themselves to him; he saw my sanguine trust, and partook of it himself. We parted, agreeing to keep our attachment a secret for another year, by which time he would have been ordained a clergyman of the Church of England; then, I said, I would communicate our love to my ever-indulg-

ent parent, and he would, I doubted not, join our hands with blessings.

“ We parted. Henry’s letters were frequent; they breathed an undiminished affection; but as the influence of my cheering words and visions became more distant, the desponding spirit he had manifested returned. He spoke of the disparity of our conditions. *I*, the child of one of noble birth, high rank, wealth, station, myself gifted with so much beauty, so many fascinations; *he*, the penniless orphan, without name or connexion, struggling for a doubtful livelihood, obscure, plebeian—how could he ever hope my father would consent to such a union ?

“ And I would reply; and as I saw each day my father’s lavish fondness and my own influence increase, so did I gain and commu-

nicate each day great hope, great grounds for hope.

“ This had its effect. Henry became sanguine as myself, and months of separation only added strength to our attachment.

“ Now begins the remorse, the agony of this long life. It was I who riveted these chains. Had I allowed his fears to triumph, had I been less sanguine, all might have been spared us ; but it was I that, by the false, delusive hopes I excited, bound him to the struggle in which our peace was wrecked.

“ His love for me was ardent as his own nature, but, wanting the stimulus of hope, it must at last have expired, or lingered but to sadden, not to destroy, the heart on which it fed ; but I gave it hope, and this roused other feelings.

“ I have said he had ambition ; this awoke as he thought of the prospect I had spread before him. My father had influence to lift him to the highest honours of his profession ; he would have scope for the talent he felt so strong within him ; he should not live an obscure life and die a forgotten death ; he might be all that his wildest day-dreams had pictured.

“ Thus, in these wild visions passed the year of absence. When he returned I saw the change ; no longer fearful and doubting, his spirit was elated with the fancied brilliant certainty before him, the attainment of my hand. This was the object ever before his eyes ; this would comprise all ; he, who once spoke but of disappointment, now would not hear the word ; his whole existence seemed wrapped up in the fulfilment of his desire.

"It was I, my counsels, my encouragement, that had wrought the change; mine was the guilt, the folly; on me has been the bitterest punishment.

"But a few days had elapsed since Henry's return when my father sent for me into his library. I had just received a note from Henry, urging me to unfold our hopes, or to allow him to do so. I resolved to take this opportunity for demanding my father's consent. I doubted not it would be complied with, as all my requests had ever been.

"My father called me to his side. 'Maria,' he said, 'you are now twenty, and this is the age I have always fixed upon as the proper time for you to marry. I have decided for some months past upon your future husband, but I have not named the matter to you,

wishing to associate you with the person of my choice, that I might, from my own observation, judge whether your dispositions appeared to assimilate. I think they do; and I have accepted the proposals of Sir James Norton. He has long loved you, and I can perceive you do not dislike him. Nothing remains to be said, Maria,' he continued; 'the affair is settled.'

"He looked me steadily in the face. My agitation could not escape him. Cold as ice, speechless, with quivering lips, I stood before him.

"The note I had just received was in my hand; it fell from my powerless fingers. My father took it up: the few passionate lines told him all our tale.

" 'Maria,' he said, 'you have deceived me

bitterly. Is this your obedience, your confidence in your father? But you know that I am never disobeyed. Prepare for your marriage; it will take place in less than three months. As for this young aspirant' (and these last words were spoken with a sneer), 'you must dismiss him with the advice to look in his own rank of life for the next lady he honours with his attachment.'

"Alas! my father spoke rightly; he never was disobeyed. I, who had never felt the force of his displeasure, quailed before it now. I could not move, I did not speak. As one stricken by a heavy blow, I stood confounded, speechless, until my father, taking me by the arm, led me to my apartments.

"Sir James Norton had been a very frequent visitor of late, and had paid me marked atten-

tion ; but I had been too much accustomed to such homage to reflect much upon it. He was gentlemanly, young, agreeable ; I had found him a pleasant companion, but, beyond this, I had never bestowed a thought upon him. Left alone in my room, I was assailed by a terrible host of feelings ; in the midst of which I was informed that Henry Ormsby awaited my presence in the drawing-room. Scarcely knowing what I did, what to say, or how to break the matter to him, I repaired to meet him. He was all hope and spirits. He beheld me enter—pale, sad, almost lifeless. My looks explained some portion of what had passed. He knew that nothing, save the prospect of our separation, could have stricken me to what he saw.

“ By degrees I told him all. What words

I used I cannot now repeat, nor his replies. I cannot paint the miserable scene that followed, nor picture to you the terrible anguish that broke forth in his frantic cries and gestures, that wrung from his eyes tears which soothed not, and withered his manly beauty to a ghastly paleness.

His violence terrified, his suffering moved me. I wept, but I could neither console nor reprove him ; and while he was uttering wild words of love, of entreaty, of despair, reproach, and I was standing transfixed, watching the desolation I had caused, my father came to separate us.

“ But Henry’s despairing passion gave him courage to surmount the habitual reverence with which he beheld my father : he ceased not to entreat, upbraid, adjure.

“ He spoke of his love; encouraged, nursed so long; grown to be the only hope and spring of his existence. He asked me to give him back his happiness, to restore that wasted year in which I had for ever robbed him of his heart’s youth.

“ Even my father’s withering contempt of this display of passion, even my own manifest sufferings, could not check him. Only when my father moved to quit the room, leading me away, he flung himself before us, and, in a moment humbled, prayed but to be allowed to say farewell! a few, few short moments more, only to say farewell!

“ All the little strength that remained deserted me at this instant. I believe I fainted. I remember nothing further of that interview.

“ Time passed: I saw him no more. I was

forced to conceal my tears. The preparations for my marriage continued; and Sir James Norton was a regular visitor at the palace, where he was openly received as my lover and intended husband. Often was I tempted to confess all to him, and at least to win my own freedom, if not happiness; but I dared not do it. He remained in ignorance of all the circumstances I have related. But I was effectually barred from any communication with Henry. I heard incidentally that he had quitted Stanwell the morning after our last meeting; and amid all the tumult of my feelings, my hope was but that he would forget me.

“I was married. Sir James loved me passionately. He was a kind and attentive husband. By degrees I overcame my grief.

I was young, and of a cheerful disposition. It was impossible to remain long miserable while surrounded with everything to make me happy, and tended by affection such as his. Another source of consolation was also mine: in the course of time I should become a mother.

“A few months before this event was expected to take place, my medical adviser recommended my removal to the mild air of Hastings. Thither, accordingly, we repaired; and my husband’s love showed itself in redoubled care and attention during this period of our union.

“I had not been many days at Hastings when, driving along one of the promenades, I saw, leaning feebly on the arm of his gentle sister, Henry Ormsby! Henry! But, oh!

so changed, so thin, so shrunken, so wan ; few eyes save mine would have recognised in that poor sinking form the figure of the once gay, brilliant, handsome Henry Ormsby !

“ I thanked Heaven that I was alone ; and the carriage whirled past them, and they saw me not.

“ But the next day, and the next, and the next, still they were there ; each day his step more feeble, his wasted form more bowed ; each day my straining eyes following them to the last, searching for them anxiously, yet shrinking in an agony of terror from the possibility of a recognition on their part.

“ My drives at first had been accidentally solitary ones. I now contrived that they should always be so. My husband was not slow to perceive the change that had taken place ; my

agitation, my sinking spirits, my shunning of his society. He thought my strange behaviour might be the result of my delicate situation: he strove, by increased kindness, to win back my regard and to cheer my spirits.

“ Alas! my happiness withered from that hour. I soon learned the truth. My maid had also seen Henry. I extracted from her unwilling lips that he had, after the scene at Stanwell, fled precipitately thence; that his sister had followed him to town, where he had been seized with a raging fever, the result of mental agitation. She had attended him through weeks of danger. He had recovered in a degree, but his constitution had received a mortal blow; he was now dying of a decline. His spirit was a proud one. He could not bear the sudden extinction of all his hopes;

his pride, his ambition, suffered with his love.
All for him was over!

"Had he forgotten me, my fate would have been different. I should soon have completely recovered my happiness. The new and gentle ties around me would have superseded the passion that had been the food of my past life; and I should scarcely have regretted its disappointment.

"But now all was changed. I saw him, sick, poor, unhappy, dying! I was the cause of this. I saw the devoted sister, her anguish written on her brow, patiently supporting to his early grave her sole friend and stay.

"Regret gave way to remorse. I was his murderess, the destroyer of his life and happiness, and of his sister's! Ever," said Lady Norton, wildly throwing her arms towards

heaven,—“ever doth the remembrance haunt me! I am his murderer. He died for and by me. His blood is on my head! But I have lived long beneath this burden, this heavy, heavy weight.”

And as she spoke this last sentence, she struck her hand slowly and gently against her heart twice or thrice; and the slight sound made by the blow fell upon the ear as the echo of some distant death-knell.

“Day after day I saw him; he too had recognised me; yet, spell-bound, I could not quit the spot where I was sure to meet him. Each day I gave orders to take the same drive; each day we met.

“He did not long continue able to walk. I saw him next in a wheeled-chair, his sister moving by his side. Then I missed him

altogether, and suffered even more in his absence than I had each day done in his presence. Another day passed; I saw him again, fearfully changed—dying, dying before my eyes!

“Now, as I leaned forward, with swimming eyes, parched lips, gazing after my victim, he turned to gaze at me. Our eyes met: we could not withdraw our looks; only, as the vehicles we were in were separated, as distance intervened between us, the gaze of those beloved eyes, so sad, so unspeakably mournful, because so forgiving, so full of patient blessing, faded from my sight, and was lost to me for ever!

“I fainted; and on reaching home a somewhat premature labour came on; and after much suffering, in the midst of all this keen mental agony, my child was born.

“Mary, the child of anguish so unutterable—how can her lot be blessed? was not she born to sorrow? But, oh! my child, though often have I, in my mournful dreamings, devoted thee to sorrow, yet never have I imaged for thee such a fate as this—such a fate as this—as this—as *this*—AS THIS!”

No words could express the deep, deep sadness of Lady Norton's look and voice: awe kept me silent, as I gazed at that woman, herself the very impersonation of woe, raising her eyes and hands to heaven, deprecating the yet darker doom that had descended upon her child.

She continued. “Mary was born; and I heard that he yet lived, but that his dissolution was hourly expected. I heard of his sufferings, of his resignation, his sorrow for

leaving his sister. I heard of that sister's agonised despair. I thought of all her feelings, her feelings towards myself. I seemed to feel the curse she must have breathed against me. I felt how *her* remembrance and *his* pale ghost must henceforth be for ever my companions.

“ After my partial recovery from my confinement, my husband, wishing to attempt to restore my cheerfulness, invited many of our relations to stay with us. He gave gay entertainments; he loaded me with splendid presents, decking me in jewels to preside over these *fêtes*. Other parties were given in return; a round of gaiety was entered into, and I was forced into all. Yes, I was the cause and the centre of all this. I was dragged from entertainment to entertainment; I shone with gems; I moved in all the luxury of dress; I laughed,

I danced, I sang, I smiled—yes, smiled, while in thought I sat beside that bed of death, and watched the passing away of that spirit, with an agony beyond the power of words.

“ But he died; and I could maintain the miserable show no longer. I was seized with severe illness, from which I recovered only to sink into the state of dejection in which my life has been passed. My husband knew not my secret, but he saw I was not happy; he saw I loved him not, nay, turned with disgust or impatience from his efforts to please me; and he unwillingly and slowly desisted from those efforts. I was left, as I wished to be, alone. I could sit and brood over the past; I could recall a thousand and a thousand times that last and parting look; could imagine, again and again,

the dreadful picture of his early death-bed; could strive (for I did strive), but vainly, to draw from my own thoughts, from religion, from any source, peace for the heart where there was no peace.

“ Two years passed; Sir James and myself became completely estranged; the fault was on my side; I sinned no less in that portion of my duty. I had been faithless to my early love; I was now disobedient to my marriage vow: in all I sinned.

“ Two years passed, and Henry's brother returned from India. We were in town at the time. He and my husband met, unknown to each other, in some place of public entertainment. Captain Ormsby had a friend with him, to whom he was detailing the cause and circumstances of his brother's death; he him-

self had but recently learned them, and his indignation was at its height. He named me openly and loudly; he spoke of my heartless deceit, my coquetry; he denounced me as the destroyer of that brother.

“ His rage was great; he coupled coarse epithets with my name. Sir James, springing from his seat, flung his glove in his face, as he shouted forth—‘ I am Lady Norton’s husband!’

“ What followed, Sir Edward, I need not relate to you. I never more saw my husband alive; Captain Ormsby shot him through the heart. After the duel, a letter was given to me; he had left it upon my toilette-table the morning of his death.

“ The lines it contained were short and sad, almost cold. He said that in all proba-

bility we should never meet again; he said that he forgave my father and myself the deception that had been practised against him; he forgave me, he said, the blight that I had thrown upon his life, the ruin of his domestic bliss, the feelings that now made him seek for death.

“Again I felt myself a murderess; he, too, died for *me*. But it is said that in the grave all things are forgotten, so let me hope.”

Lady Norton ceased abruptly. I, listening to her tale, wondered not at her life-long anguish; her words, her wild fixed look, her terrible recital, roused me to a kindred suffering; I could have wept for her whose burning eyeballs ached for the boon of tears.

She spoke again.

“Doubtless you will call me guilty as

weak in the course I pursued towards my husband; and I know that I was so. I cast away my own happiness—I destroyed his; but, while aware of the wickedness and folly of my conduct, I could not change it; the blow had been too heavy, it had crushed me to the earth; I could not rise again. Nothing sufficed to obliterate that remembrance—no, not for a moment. Even this child, who alone has held me to this weary life, she has had no power to soothe or calm me; her presence failed to give me peace or pleasure, and the living death of her present fate scarce adds a pang to my extreme of suffering; yet I have loved her as few mothers love their offspring, having nought else to love.”

Our interview with Lady Norton concluded,

all her questions responded to, everything that could be offered to assuage her grief having been offered, and all without effect, we took a sad departure. Sir Edward, to whom her story had hitherto been as great a mystery as it had been to myself, was considerably dejected by it. He and Sir James Norton had been early friends. The death of the latter had been a severe blow both to Sir Edward and Lady Desborough; and the recital he had listened to had renewed with double bitterness the painful feelings excited by that event.

We returned to Holmesley, where the repetition of this tale created great sadness; but after remaining there a day, I was forced to go to town on business of my own; and, meeting Neville and Henry Wentworth,

learned from the former a piece of news connected with another of my fair cousins. I met them together at one of the clubs. Surprised to see them in town at such an unseasonable season, I approached them to inquire their whither and whereabouts; when Neville, rising with one of his gloomy, almost savage looks, bowed coldly, and retired into a neighbouring window.

Henry, perceiving me draw back, and anxious to prevent a quarrel, advanced and seized me by the arm. "Don't mind Neville," he whispered; "he is terribly annoyed by his disappointment."

"Disappointment?" I exclaimed, in a tone of inquiry.

"Yes, his disappointment with your cousin Julia; it has quite cut him up."

Julia! Oh! so there had been another proposal and another refusal.

I candidly confessed my ignorance upon the subject; and Henry enlightened me as far as he was able. He told me that Neville had prosecuted his suit lately with much greater hope of success, owing to the increased gaiety and freedom of Julia's manner; that, on hearing of the elopement of Mary, he immediately wrote a proposal to Lady Desborough, anxious to show her that his wish to be connected with the family was in no way decreased by the late unfortunate event; and that her ladyship had replied, thanking him, but regretting most sincerely the insuperable objections of her daughter to the alliance offered.

Listening, I did indeed feel very sure

that her ladyship spoke the truth when she said that she "sincerely regretted it."

Before our conversation had proceeded much further, Neville joined us. His usual courteous manner had returned. He extended his hand to me. "I beg your pardon, Greville," he said; "you must have thought me very odd just now; but I have had a good deal to annoy me lately; and I confess I have sometimes some difficulty in restraining my feelings."

Of course I shook him by the hand, and told him I condoled with him. "Girls were fickle things, and not worth making oneself unhappy about;" and then, as our conversation became more and more confidential, I mentioned my late visit, which led them to speak of Mary.

"I fear," said Neville, "the news that we

have all heard is too true. You, of course, know all particulars?"

"I know," I answered, "that poor Mary has been driven into a very wrong and foolish course; but I have heard no particulars. I do not even know where they are."

"They are in Paris. It is said Marston is making every effort for a divorce, and that Lyle has written to him to offer all the assistance in his power towards that object; but many doubt whether Marston will obtain one. Has he written to Lady Norton?"

"No; but he has written to Lady Desborough, who has always acted as mother to his wife, and his letter was a specimen of cool hypocrisy; through his affected grief his real triumph and coarse delight were plainly manifest."

"It could scarcely be called an elopement," observed Henry. "He surprised Mrs. Marston and Lyle together. Lyle was holding her hand as he entered the room. It is said he attacked his wife with the grossest abuse. Her lover rose, and, without speaking, led her from the room. Marston followed them into the garden, and literally turned them out of doors, locking the door behind them. Her maid brought her a shawl and bonnet, and she suffered herself to be led away. That is the history of what they call an elopement."

"What an extraordinary story!" I exclaimed. "And I hear old Mrs. Marston and the bishop are half mad with rage and disappointment."

"So much the better; let them suffer also. Theirs was the work; let them reap the

whirlwind they have sown for the benefit of others."

"It fell on them quite as a sudden blow. They have both been so infirm of late, and so much secluded, that what was apparent to all other eyes had never even been hinted at to them. Marston took care his mother should know nothing of what was passing."

"Well," said Neville, "it is a sad affair. All the world cries shame on Marston, and every one pities his wife, and most especially those poor children. But, Greville, have you any inclination for a trip to Ireland? Henry and I are off in a few days."

"Ireland!" I exclaimed. "What takes you there?"

"Why," said Henry, "there has been a grand disturbance on my father's estate. The

'finest pisantry on earth' are becoming very uproarious. They have been shooting at our agent, and burning down one of the bailiff's farms, and are calling out loudly against absenteeism, and for 'Repale;' and I am going over to investigate matters a little, and smooth them down to the utmost of my power. Perhaps they may have been unjustly treated by some of our underlings; but I hope to set it all to rights. As for Neville, he was not to have come originally; but, having taken it into his head that a little change will do him good, he has volunteered as aide-de-camp, in which capacity I take him; and if you will join the party as travelling secretary, with a nominal salary and no work, you shall be 'kindly welcome.'"

"Do come, Greville," said Neville. "I know you have never been in Ireland. Now, do come, there's a good fellow!"

“ And, pray, how are you going?” I inquired.

“ Oh, I was going as younger sons should go—on the tops of coaches. But Neville hates roughing it, so we post in his carriage, which we shall take across the Channel with us. There is plenty of room for you, and we shall be really very glad of your company.”

I first laughed at this proposal, then began to reflect upon it seriously. The idea really pleased me. I had nothing to do in England; I could do no good to any one by remaining; I was thoroughly depressed and wearied by the aspect of affairs; I at last began to consider with Neville—“ that a little change would do me good.” Before we parted it was a settled affair—I was to accompany them to Ireland.

Certainly I had a right to feel disgusted

with the aspect of things. All seemed to have gone wrong. Added to the late terrible blow, now came the certainty that Julia still cherished her foolish and most hopeless attachment for Freddy Wentworth. I knew, also, that Caroline had decidedly rejected William, who, gaining confidence from the refusal of George Danvers, had, since that event, renewed his passionate avowals of love; and, on the very day on which I met the Wentworths, I read in the "Morning Post" the announcement of the marriage of Tom Wilmot, at Naples, to a Miss Matilda Wynyard, one of the six daughters of a husband-hunting old matron, well known among the English and continental watering-places and towns of public resort.

Poor Tom's heart, I afterwards learned, had been caught in the rebound. Mrs. Wynyard

was a skilful matchmaker. From the moment of Tom's arrival within her reach, he had been marked as a victim.

Every effort had been made to obtain him. Picnics, *déjeûnées*, balls, dances, guitars, songs, *tête-à-têtes*, tears, faintings; and at last, when Mrs. Wynyard intimated to him that her daughter's happiness was at stake, and that his conduct required explanation, Tom, sad and subdued by his recent heartache, not clearly understanding which daughter it was, touched by the idea of any one of the six dying for love of him, placed himself implicitly in the hands of the besieging matron, and, after a decent interval of a fortnight, found himself united to Miss Matilda Wynyard.

The commotion excited in England among his friends, when the news of this match

arrived, was great indeed. The Wilsnots talked openly of their disappointment and dislike to the very questionable connexion; while poor Fanny's changing cheek and altered manner proclaimed how much she felt the blow that severed them in all probability for ever.

How sincerely and how soon Tom regretted the step he had taken was early to be perceived from his letters; and through many years of unhappy union on his part, of sad single blessedness on that of Fanny, we wondered and wondered what could have separated two hearts so fondly attached, and disturbed the course of a love on which all circumstances seemed to smile favourably, and which still, in separation, in absence, in perfect hopelessness, retained, it was easy to discover, all its early force and fondness.

CHAPTER III.

THE part of Ireland in which lay the estates of the Earl of Carlington was the famous county of Tipperary; and my readers will be perfectly able to imagine, from that one word, what "estate" they were in. Things were as bad as they could be: men with black crape on their faces performed all kinds of unlawful acts by night; decent folks without crape found it unsafe to stir without loaded fire-arms by day; fighting, speechifying, writing threatening notices, were the fashionable amuse-

ments of a light nature; people of superior energy preferred shooting agents, abducting village heiresses, and firing hayricks. O'Connell was known as the father of his country, and the Liberator of Ireland. The Earl of Carlington was flatteringly spoken of as "the old snake," and his sons as "the young vipers;" the remainder of the inhabitants of England being generally denominated "false Saxons."

I am convinced that the originators of each new piece of cant have a personification of their favourite hobby in their own minds, and imagine themselves to bear some resemblance to it. Thus the inventor of "Young France" dreamed of a baboon, with long uncurled locks and barbed chin, and forthwith, as he raised his cry, fashioned his outward man to the semblance of his vision. His followers copied

him; and each, as he each day places his steeple-crowned hat upon his flowing locks, and issues forth with his cigar above his pointed chin, believes himself an exact representation of the genius of "Young France."

"Young England" thinks in a similar strain as it ties its white neckcloth; but "Young Ireland," of a more poetical temperament, sighs only as it pictures to itself how pretty it would look with short green tunic, sandaled feet, golden ringlets, and harp of gold, and no doubt imagines that the moment "Repale" is granted it may revel in this becoming costume, which will henceforth be the "national" one.

We found, when we arrived at our destination, that we were extremely unpopular, and the Earl of Carlington even more so.

Thanks to a life of absenteeism, to the influence of bad or weak agents, to the denunciations of O'Connell and his gang, and the intrigues of their priests, the poor "tininty" were in a fearful state of disorder; some miserable through poverty — more through guilt; a few respectable, decent beings, willing to live in peace with their neighbours and work for their livelihood; but these overpowered by the ruffianly ferocity of the majority, and often suffering for their moderation.

Henry did all he could to conciliate them personally, while he followed his father's wishes in regard to investigations into the state of his agents' accounts.

Daily did he give audiences and hear grievances; and he was beginning to acquire for

himself the confidence and affection of the tenants, when an unforeseen event deprived him of both, and of all else in this world.

A virulent fever raged in the nearest village. Henry caught it by entering the cottage of a man who he heard was sick and in want. He left the sufferer money that procured him all the comforts necessary to his situation, and sent a physician to visit him. The man recovered, but Henry took the infection in its worst form, and died in less than a week from that moment.

Delirious during the whole of his illness, his gentle and affectionate heart spoke out of those fearful ravings. He talked of Emma—"dear Emma," and his mother and his father, and continually of his brothers. "When would Freddy return from sea?" "Why was

not Neville here? Where was Neville—his brother Neville? Why was he away?" And Neville, amid these mournful wanderings, sat by the bedside, his face hid in his hands, and wept like a child.

All the medical aid that could be procured was called in; but the mandate had gone forth, and Henry sank beneath the violence of the fever on the sixth day of his seizure.

Neville had written to announce to their parents the illness of his brother, and its dangerous nature. It fell to my lot to inform them of his decease, and to request their commands as to the place of interment.

An answer speedily arrived, borne by Wilcox, an old and confidential servant of the Carlington family. It was the wish of the deceased's parents that the corpse should be

brought to England, and interred in the family vault with the remains of a long line of noble ancestors.

Sadly and slowly we set forth : the hearse, with its nodding plumes, in front ; we followed ; a third carriage contained old Wilcox. Many of the neighbouring gentry sent their equipages to do honour to the sad procession for part of the way, and an immense body of tenantry surrounded and followed the *cortège*.

We remarked that these tenantry—among whom we recognised the man whose cottage Henry had visited on the day he caught the infection, and for whom he might be said to have sacrificed his life, and who now, pale and tottering from recent illness, wept aloud beside the hearse—were all armed in some way ;

and, on inquiring the reason, we were told an attack was expected.

I certainly did not believe, until practically convinced of my error, that such brutality could exist. That men belonging to a country which claims generosity and nobleness of spirit, as among its chief virtues, should league themselves to insult the unconscious remains of the young stranger who came but to offer to them amity and protection, appeared to me as a thing impossible. Yet, so it was; and those of the tenants who had felt the kindness of the departed, and all who were actuated by feelings of humanity, had arrayed themselves to protect the cold remains of their lord's son.

As we emerged from the great gates of the Carlington mansion, at that time occupied by a steward, and where we had had apartments

during our stay, we observed, on either side of the road, lines of men and women, apparently engaged in watching the procession. Each step that we advanced brought us opposite yet increasing numbers; as we passed, these closed behind and followed us.

We reached the town of D——. Traversing the narrow streets, the first symptoms of disorder appeared. Women, standing at the doors of the small cottages in the suburbs, scowled at us as we passed; a few stones, thrown by unseen hands, struck the hearse; a few deep oaths were heard, a few loud groans. The heir of these broad lands, following the corpse of a young and beloved brother, went slowly from among his father's people to the grave that levels all rank, and no one cried "God bless him!"

But when we had cleared the town, and entered on the high road, which follows the windings of the river, the tumult began in good earnest. Mobs of men, some disguised, all armed, rushed violently against the hearse and carriages, their object evidently being to overturn them into the river ; and the gallantry of the little band of friends who supported us was but just able to prevent this result.

Step by step we still advanced; the servants, the agents, and stewards, holding the horses' heads, while our friendly tenantry attempted to repulse the enemy; those on foot making good use of their bludgeons, those on horseback laying about lustily with their riding-whips.

Our own situation was somewhat critical. Fierce faces pressed close to our windows,

which latter were soon broken in the *mêlée*; and frightful oaths and denunciations were hurled at the devoted head of the heir of Carlington.

Every possible grievance was complained of, every possible vengeance threatened; while "the proud spawn of the ould one," as a huge ruffian politely denominated Neville, sat, with his calm, stern face towards them, bending somewhat forward in the carriage, so as to expose himself completely to them, and regarding them with a flashing eye and curling lip, whose mocking and contemptuous silence seemed to enrage them more than any words could have done.

For myself, I confess I was sufficiently startled by the position in which we found ourselves to attempt the influence of a little

gentle persuasion addressed to some particularly ill-looking monsters who were poking their dirty faces extremely near mine, and calling me a variety of pretty names; but I found my speech answered, or rather interrupted, by such hideous howls, I was'fain to put my tongue to some better purpose; and accordingly I seized an opportunity of conveying to a stout farmer riding near us my opinion that the sooner the military were sent for the better.

To my delight, I saw the man obey my injunction by starting himself immediately on the errand.

The summons had not gone too soon. As we approached a bridge which crossed the river, just as the road made a somewhat sudden descent, the mob renewed their efforts to sing

us into the stream, and almost succeeded in doing so.

It was scarcely possible to get the horses forward. The hearse, with its nodding plumes, swayed from side to side; the reins were torn from the hands of the driver; the frightened horses, backing as the tremendous mob shouted and fought before their faces, bade fair to overturn their burden, or precipitate it into the water. Our carriage was struck by showers of stones, and bedaubed with splashes of mud; while many hearty blows were given and received around and beside us.

It was at the moment that Neville, seeing hands laid on the edge of the window with the evident intention of striving to push the carriage over, drew a pistol, and, speaking for the first time, swore to shoot the first man who

touched with evil intent the vehicle that held him—and that the mob, for a second awed, wavered a little on that side—that the quick advance of the cavalry was heard; and, in almost as short a time as I take to write this line, the populace retreated at sight of the armed soldiery, and we were left among friends.

But the rioters did not flee; they retired slowly, laughing and jeering at the dragoons, who, unheeding as would have been statues of iron placed in similar circumstances, drew to the sides of the *cortège*, and reined their horses to the solemn funeral pace.

And so we continued our melancholy way until we arrived at the town at which we halted for the night, when our escort and their courteous commander, their services no longer required, returned to their quarters.

The town where we rested was little more than a large village. It contained but one decent inn. Even that would scarcely accommodate our small party. Apartments, refreshments, attendance, everything, was on the most limited scale.

The room in which Neville and myself passed the evening was on the ground floor. It was square and low; the floor, partially concealed by a carpet, was of brick; the two low square windows looked into a sort of open court or yard at the back of the inn, beyond which could be seen the high road and open country.

We dined about five. We were hungry and exhausted, and ordered dinner early. It was served to us on a small round table, placed nearly opposite the two windows. I sat with

my back towards these, Neville nearly facing them.

There was just sufficient daylight to allow us to dine without lights. The cloth withdrawn, and the bottle of miserable wine placed before us, we sat and conversed on the events of the day until it became completely dark, and until the bright autumnal moon had arisen in all her radiance.

“It is strange,” said Neville, “that I, who never had a superstitious feeling in my life until this time, should have found my first foreboding so sadly realized. From the moment I set foot on Irish land, I felt some great evil was about to befall me; and every moment I remained only increased the presentiment. Is it not strange?”

“It is, indeed,” I replied; “and it has been

most sadly realized. Our misfortune has been a heavy one. We shall neither of us forget our first visit to Ireland."

"*And our last,*" uttered Neville, in an ominous tone.

"Why, I hope so," I said. "I certainly have no wish to trespass a second time upon the hospitalities of the sister country."

"But I felt," said Neville, speaking quickly — "I felt as though I should never see England again; as though the interpretation of my foreboding would be to my own destruction. I little thought it would descend on the head of my brother. It was under that impression that I considered it right to make a sort of will. You will laugh, Greville; but it is true. I have written down my last wishes, believing at the time that my end was at hand."

And Neville, as he spoke, drew a packet from his pocket, and flung it on the table.

"Even now," he continued, "I feel it impossible to shake off my dejection. A weight hangs upon me, as though the bonds of my fate were near; a dark veil seems closing around me. I feel as though I had no further object in life; as though the world to me were nothing—I nothing to the world."

"Come, come, Neville; these are foolish fancies. You cannot wonder that your spirits are so low just at present. Think of what you have gone through. Your loss has been a great one; and your other disappointments have combined to make the last few weeks of your life anything but pleasant ones. But come; rouse yourself; don't let these fancies oppress you."

“ Mine has, indeed, been a great loss. No brothers were so attached as we were. Poor Henry and I have never had an unkind word. The sincerest friendship has always existed between us. We had no secrets from each other: we were friends, even more than brothers.”

The moon was now sailing overhead, and shining directly into the room. Her light was cast through the two square windows, marking distinctly upon the floor each division of the panes; the shadow of the sill of one fell exactly before my feet.

The moonlight also poured full upon the pale and noble features of Neville, and on his tall, graceful figure.

“ After all, Greville,” he added in a gayer tone, “ Henry may be the best off of us three.

He has had little trouble in this life; he can never now know trouble more. I now recognise some truth in this line, which I have always regarded hitherto as untrue, if not impious :—

‘ Those the gods love die young.’”

“ Impious !” I repeated. “ What impiety is there in that idea ?”

“ Oh ! perhaps none ; but my idea is, that men were born to bear, to suffer, to struggle, to bear misfortunes, that they may be rewarded by everlasting bliss ; to suffer and to conquer temptation, to do good by good example, and to lead children up to virtue and holiness : therefore I have always regarded such men as the special favourites of Heaven who are permitted to pass through the trials of a long life with usefulness to their fellow-creatures, and

with credit in the eyes of God, rather than those who perish, it is true, before the disappointments of life have touched them, but still with gifts unexercised, and purposes unfulfilled."

Neville's voice was very mournful as he uttered these last few words. I had no reply to make. We sat for a few seconds in silence.

My eyes rested on the floor, where I saw the dark outlines of the window, the division of the panes, and still, close at my feet, the strait boundary of the sill.

As I unconsciously gazed upon this light and shade, I saw the shadow of a dark shape rise slowly above the lower edge of the window. For a second I spoke not, moved not. It continued to rise, until I could clearly discern that it was caused by the intervention of a

man's head between the moonlight and the floor that reflected it.

As instinct—I suppose that of self-preservation—prompted me to fling myself forward from my seat, I shouted to Neville as I did so, “Down, Neville, down! there is danger!”

But Neville, unconscious of my cause of alarm, and above all fear, rose calmly and leisurely from his seat, and drew himself to his full height, just as the bullet of the assassin crashed through the glass—whistled past me as I was springing against Neville, anxious to get him beyond the betraying glare of the moonbeams—and, well aimed, pierced him to the heart.

He whirled suddenly round and fell. I raised him in my arms. The people of the house and our servants rushed into the room.

All that could be done was done ; but ere the surgeon who was sent for could arrive, Neville was dead !

To describe the scene in that room is beyond my power. The pale, unheeding moon still shining so calmly ; her silver beams mingling with the ruddier glare of the lights hastily brought in by the assembling crowd ; the fear, the agitation painted on some faces, the lurking exultation visible on others ; the terror of the landlord ; the frantic grief of old Wilcox, and of poor Neville's own servant ; the noise, the confusion, women crying, men swearing ; some exclaiming that the villain had been taken, others contradicting this as soon as it was said, and, amid all this turmoil, what had been Neville lying tranquilly on the cold floor, his head upon my knee, his splendid features wearing an impression almost heavenly in its

perfect repose, in its divine and pallid beauty; while around his prostrate form, the blood, creeping slowly forth into the light, curdled beneath the moonbeams.

The murderer of Lord Neville was never found. A great price was set upon his head, and every effort taken to bring him to justice; but hitherto he has escaped all. It is true that, some years subsequent, a man was taken up on suspicion, and myself, with the other spectators of the death of his victim, were summoned to the trial. Our evidence could substantiate nothing; but other witnesses were brought forward who proved his identity with the murderer beyond a doubt—at least, so all who heard the evidence considered; and, to judge from the surprise of the prisoner when an acquittal took place, so did he; but the jury thought otherwise.

Tedious and sad was my journey to England in this mournful company; but it ended at last, and I consigned the brothers to their final rest. The funeral was attended by the old earl and nearly all the male relatives of the family.

They were buried in the family vault in the parish-church of the village of S—; and scarce a dry eye watched the awful ceremony that gave to dust the remains of these two gallant and youthful kinsmen, thus cut off so suddenly and so mysteriously. Freddy had been written for home immediately on the death of Henry, but had not had time to arrive.

The will that Neville had made consisted merely of a request to his father to settle a sufficient fortune upon Freddy to allow him

to marry Julia Desborough. Thus the last act of his life showed to its full extent the nobility of the departed spirit.

As for the young lady I have once before alluded to, as believing her to be the object of Henry's attachment, and of whom I imagined he spoke during his last illness when calling upon the name of "Emma," I saw her once again, but so changed that I with difficulty recognised her. She was completely overcome on hearing my name, and quitted the apartment where we met shortly after I entered it. I heard subsequently that she married, to please her mother, a man much older than herself, of large fortune; and that, though she appears always contented and resigned, she has never quite recovered from the blow that separated her from the lover of her youth.

CHAPTER IV.

AND now I hope that the least penetrating of my readers will have already divined that Freddy Wentworth, now become Lord Neville, was no longer looked coldly upon as a suitor to my cousin Julia by her lady mamma.

“ Really, John,” said her ladyship, “ I hope you will not think me very unfeeling, but positively I must say in this case that everything appears to have been for the best. ‘ Out of evil comes good ;’ and since the deaths of those poor young men, my Julia has had the prospect before her of the happiest of lives ;

whereas, before, she seemed giving herself up to an attachment which I never, under any circumstances, could have countenanced."

"Not if Julia had been dying of love, Jane?" I inquired.

"That is rather a strong case to put, John. I cannot imagine any child of mine dying for love; but, however, we will not discuss such matters, all danger of such an event being over. It is altogether," continued her ladyship, "very satisfactory. Nothing could be better than the connexion; the estates are very fine, and unencumbered; and Frederick now being an only child, the whole of the personal property will be his, as well as his mother's fortune—poor woman!"

"Yes, Jane," I said, "you may well sigh when you speak of her. What a loss for a

mother to sustain! I almost wonder the old people survived that blow."

"It *was* a blow, John; but their affection now is poured upon Frederick. Julia also comes in for a large share; they dote upon her as though she were indeed their daughter, and can scarcely bear the twain out of their sight. And, John, how well it is that this splendid alliance takes place just at this time; it will quite draw attention from the late very painful event in our family."

This observation was made in her ladyship's morning-room in the house in May Fair, whither the family had returned, as usual, the spring following the disastrous autumn which involved the elopement of Mary and the catastrophe of the brothers. Julia and Frederick were publicly engaged, but the marriage was

not to take place until a twelvemonth had elapsed since the latter event.

“ Have you heard anything of Mary lately ? ”
I inquired.

“ I have heard only that she and Lyle are in England ; they have returned on some matters connected with the divorce. All parties are anxious for it, and all dread it will not be procured, owing to the conduct of Marston. The damages given at the trial were ridiculously small, and opinion is much against him.”

“ Where are the children ? ”

“ They are with him ; but it is said he has taken a dislike to them, because they ask him continually for their ‘ pretty mamma,’ a question which drives him almost mad. When old Mrs. Marston dies, I am sure I do not know what will become of those poor little things.”

"I suppose she is not long for this world," I said. "And the bishop—he must be near his end."

"They have met once since," said Jane. "I am told it was a painful interview. Both commenced by deploring the 'untoward event,' and lamenting the 'rupture between the families it has occasioned;' and so on in the old style; but at last the bishop's feelings triumphed over all his hypocrisy and worldly wisdom, and he passionately reproached himself and Mrs. Marton for the part they had taken in the marriage; while she, cool and hypocritical to the last, continued to affect to believe that everything had been done for the best, and that fate alone had been to blame. Whatever her real feelings were, she would never unmask them, even to her old friend and coadjutor the

bishop ; but, in her heart, no doubt she feels most deeply the disgrace and the odium which have been cast on her son ; she is so proud, she will writhe under it. I know her well, and," added Lady Desborough, " I *hate* her."

" And so do I, Jane, and her son also ; and the more they suffer the better ; but for those poor children I do feel sorry. How strange that Marston should be so eager for a divorce ! it will affect their future interests so much, both as regards the disgrace, and the loss they will sustain in Mary's fortune, which will be considerable at last, taking all into consideration."

" Do you not know the cause of his eagerness for the divorce ? It is because his whole soul is given to the idea of marrying Lady Anne Grantley, who, I know, will never accept him ; she was too fond of our poor Mary, and too

well aware of the real state of affairs, to think of him with anything but contempt. But imagine, John, the deceit of that old dowager ; she never told the bishop of her son's prior attachment at the time of the marriage, and, when he reproached her with the knowledge at their recent interview, she pretended to know nothing about it. Can you fancy such dissimulation ?”

“ Ah ! her dissimulation has caused much misery to others, and some discomfort to herself ; but let her take the consequences ; hers be the guilt, the punishment !”

“ Alas ! John, men judge by outward show, and poor Mary, ‘ more sinned against than sinning,’ is hooted from society, while people like Mrs. Marston and the bishop pass through existence and go to their graves crowned with honours. What a strange story is Mary’s !”

she continued; "and how little did I ever dream that she would act as she has done! Had I been asked the question, which of my nieces I thought most influenced by her passions, I should have said that at any rate she was the least so, but the event has proved to the contrary."

"Her passions, Jane," I replied, "are not stronger than ordinary, or her mind worse regulated; but her nature is weak, and she had never loved until she met Lyle. It was an overwhelming passion, bursting over all barriers, mighty as the waves of the sea. It came, too, at the very age, at the very moment, when it was most dangerous—after a few years of independent life, during which she had been surrounded with admirers, had rendered admiration almost necessary to her. She saw not

that a deeper feeling fed the homage offered by Lyle—the pleasure with which she received it. Too late the presence of the tyrant Love was recognised.”

“Has Mary ever written to any of you?” I continued.

“Never; but once to her mother. She seemed to feel the thoughts of the sorrow she would occasion Maria more even than her separation from her children. As for Maria, I have never seen her since; and from all accounts I hear she is yet more desponding than ever.

“You see, John,” exclaimed her ladyship, suddenly changing the subject, “Fanny must have been in love with Tom Wilmot all the time. She is an altered girl since his marriage. I am convinced it was, somehow or other, all

her own fault. He was sincerely attached to her; and is miserable, they say, with his wife."

"What sort of person is she?" I inquired.

"Oh! exactly what I thought she would be. I have heard of her mother before. She made herself very conspicuous some years ago by running away with a Mr. Connell, or some such name. Her husband pursued her; and, being a man of an accommodating disposition, consented to take her back, provided she promised to do her duty by her daughters ever after. And so she has, judging from the match she has pounced upon for this one," said her ladyship, with a deep sigh; "but you may form a tolerable idea of what sort of family it is with such a father and mother at the head of it."

Time rolled away, autumn approached, and

the wedding of Julia and Lord Neville was fixed for the month of October. We withdrew to Holmesley for the summer, but returned to town a few weeks previous to the day appointed for the marriage, which was to take place in St. George's, Hanover-square.

These few weeks were spent in choosing the *trousseau*; and again the scene was enacted that is enacted before every marriage; and the three cousins and their friends spent their time in driving from shop to shop, and in consulting, with the most important faces in the world, upon the quality of a satin, or the fineness of a lace.

To me, accustomed as I had been through life to think and speak of "my four little girls," the blank caused by the loss of Mary was painfully apparent. Her image was continually

before my eyes, as I had seen her in the midst of a similar occupation; her voice would ring in my ears between each sentence, as I listened to the gay chatter of the three; her name, as I would address one or other of them, would rise unbidden to my lips, and almost force an utterance.

And doubt not the cousins felt as deeply as myself. Even the bride would sigh over the gulf between herself and the sister of her youth; but these feelings were not communicated; the *name* was never breathed; no one wished to sadden the happy present by an allusion to the dark and melancholy past. Mary, unspoken of, yet unforgotten, only in the hearts of those who mourned her was for ever present.

To the surprise of most, the bill for the divorce

had passed. Marston was again free. Mary could wed the man for whom she had given up so much ; but we had heard nothing of her marriage ; we knew not even where she was.

The day arrived. It was a lovely October morning ; the sky was suffused with that golden light that belongs so exclusively to that season of the year. There was not a breath of wind, nor a cloud to be seen. All nature seemed hushed in a perfect harmony. Everything appeared combined to shed happy omens on the scene about to be enacted.

Julia, dressed most becomingly, supported by her host of pretty bridesmaids, looked lovely as the loveliest among them. Happiness had made her more than ever beautiful. Frederick was in raptures of delight ; the old Earl and Countess of Carlington smiled fondly

upon him ; Lady Desborough was perfectly radiant with satisfaction.

Of course the chief bridesmaids were Caroline and Fanny. Both were changed since the last time they had borne that office. A few years had rolled over the heads of each. To Fanny they had brought disappointment, which had tinged her manner with a sadness foreign to her nature ; over Caroline they had passed with a happier influence. She was less miserable than she had been at that former wedding. Her one great grief rankled less deeply ; her pride had been avenged by her late refusal of her faithless lover ; her ambition was gratified by the success of her efforts for fame ; she felt no longer humiliated in her own estimation ; her self-respect was in a great measure restored. And Caroline's expression became less sad,

her smile somewhat less infrequent; and the unnatural shadow that was once ever on her face, seeming as though age had descended suddenly upon the mind shrined in a youthful form and looking forth from a young countenance, was lifted from her brow.

But years, that had somewhat clouded the joyousness that was the most fascinating characteristic of Fanny, had added to the intellectual and soulful loveliness of Caroline. She, who had been so beautiful in her bright girlhood—so beautiful beneath the anguish of her deceived heart—she was yet more beautiful now. Time had brought fresh stores of charms for her. Those dark full eyes were yet more lustrous in their magnificent beauty; that form was developed to the very perfection of symmetry; each tint upon her cheek and rosy

lips seemed to have ripened to a lovelier crimson; the folds of her rich hair were burnished to a brighter auburn; while on her face, where once the expression of present sorrow was painful to behold, a mournful pensiveness alone remained—a passionate languor, which seemed to say “I have loved and I have suffered, but I now repose.” And these years, which had added to her mental acquirements, and ripened all the powers and faculties of her splendid intellect, had also increased upon her countenance that exquisite mingling of the fire of genius with the grace of beauty, that something so indescribable, so fascinating, which never have I seen save in two faces—the one warm flesh and blood, the other chilly marble—the one my Caroline’s, the other that mutilated yet divine head, the Psyche of the South.

Yet, as the footsteps of a demon are said to take from the turf they press not only the present verdure but the power to spring again for evermore, so the blight which had passed over her youthful heart had withered its affections; the terrible presence had departed, but the effects remained. No second love sprang into consoling beauty above the grave of the first; what *had been* sufficed for her.

If I may use such an expression, I shall say that disappointment was not so *becoming* to Fanny. What made Caroline pensive rendered Fanny either petulant or peevish; and the aspect of care was less bewitching upon her petite and piquant face. Those laughing eyes, those light waving ringlets, that sunny smile, were never meant to be dimmed or touched by early sorrow. The Fates had

made a grand mistake about Fanny. They were wrong altogether — that was evident; while Caroline looked so lovely in her sadness, grief seemed to visit her only to add a charm to all that was before so charming.

The wedding was fixed to take place at half-past eleven. It was to be *recherché* in the extreme, both as regards style and company; but yet was called “strictly private.”

This was chiefly because it was deemed more decorous that it should be so considered, on account of the recent singular and melancholy events that had occurred in the families both of the bride and bridegroom; and the emptiness of town at that season was another very sufficient reason.

However, Lady Desborough had managed to procure a bishop to perform the ceremony—

his Grace of Ludworth—who was to meet them in the church at the hour named.

The guests invited to the superb *déjeuner* that was to follow the return of the party from church were all connexions of the two houses about to be united, and comprised some of the most distinguished denizens of the great world. These had remained in, or come up to town, *exprès*. Few had been the excuses sent; propitious was the weather; perfect were the arrangements; and everybody was pleased.

So far every one was pleased; but I have not taken my party to church yet.

We were very punctual, perhaps a moment before our time; and as we dashed up to the church-door, we saw a carriage there before us—a solitary carriage. I was with Sir Edward and William. We conjectured that it had

conveyed some other party, animated with the same object as ourselves, to the same altar; yet we agreed that it must be a very extraordinary wedding which could squeeze all its paraphernalia of bride, bridegroom, bridesmaids, bridesmen, fathers, mothers, and brothers, into one plain travelling-chariot.

At our approach, the postillion looked rather disconcerted and irresolute, and turned to ask the advice of a *distingué*-looking footman in plain dark great-coat, and with a cockade in his hat, who stood by the steps of the carriage. This personage gazed for a moment into the porch, as though he expected the instant appearance of his employers. Not perceiving them, he replied to the postillion's question by springing up behind, and the chariot moved to a sufficient distance to allow our equipages and those of

the Carlington party space to set down their occupants, and drive away to make room for the rest.

As the last vehicle set down its burthen, the strange chariot came up behind, and resumed its station at the church-door.

We entered, and proceeded up the centre aisle. Sir Edward led his daughter; Lady Desborough was supported by her son. As they advanced up the church, she whispered to him,—“Ah! William, I trust the next marriage I attend will be yours.” And William replied by a faint smile, followed by a more demonstrative sigh.

Up the aisle they swept, a brilliant company. The broad sunshine flooded the sacred fane, and, passing unregardingly above the dead that slept beneath their feet, stayed to add splen-

dour to the splendid dresses, light to the gleaming jewels, beauty to the peerless faces, lingered fondly in the lustre of dark eyes, and on the folds of radiant hair.

In that little group were gathered all that the world most prizes, and all that the dreaming poet loves the best: on the one side, rank and wealth, and the many advantages of noble blood and high station; on the other, youth, beauty, and, best of all, true love.

Proudly they sweep towards the goal of their desires; beneath Heaven's blessing, poured down in sunshine, on they go.

But, lo! before the altar these approach, with head that turns from the glare of day, and form that trembles with an emotion that seemeth agony, kneels a woman; and by her side is one who plights his faith to her. Who are these?

Wrapt in their own emotions, they hear or heed not the rustle of the light footsteps that ascend the aisle. Hurriedly the priest bestows the parting benediction; they rise, and turn, and descend the altar steps, and pass between the dividing group of strangers thus unwittingly intruding on their lonely marriage rites.

Strangers, did I say? Ah! would it had been so! but, too late for either parties to avoid the contact, MARY LYLE and her deserted friends met face to face.

A faint cry, so low that only the foremost of the party heard it, escaped the miserable bride; but the bridegroom, drawing to its full height the majesty of his glorious stature, led her forth from amid the wondering, horror-stricken countenances that gazed in silence on this unexpected vision, his own beautiful

features and calm eyes meeting the look around him with a proud, defying gaze. Mary's veil had been lowered before the recognition had taken place. Through its white folds those who loved her could see the deep, deep blush that stained the marble of her thin cheek and wasted brow, then faded, leaving them of an unearthly whiteness; they could see that she was changed, though still so beautiful. Alas! who talks of omens? "Blessed," they say, "is the bride the sun shines on!" Now, the same sun that shed light upon the happy face and happier heart of Julia smiled on the face whose manifest agony but faintly shadowed forth the tempest that raged within, and danced with equal lustre on the large azure eyes, half blinded with bitter tears, on the showering golden ringlets which

fell upon a breast heaving with shame and anguish.

It was like a dream—and like a dream it passed away. When the gazers recovered breath and self-possession, Mary and her new-made husband were gone; no words were said as we took our places beside the altar. Ere the first accents fell from the lips of the bishop, we heard the rattling of the chariot-wheels as it bore them away.

If one was to read such an occurrence in a novel, one would cry, "How absurd! as if such a *contretemps* could ever have taken place in real life!"

However, it did take place, as many living can testify; but that it was a singular circumstance, and would have been regarded in a work of fiction as "improbable," I admit.

But poor Mary, quite out of the world, living in strict seclusion, would know nothing, or at least very little, of the arrangements of her cousin's bridal, and Lady Desborough was completely ignorant of *her* movements: chance had regulated the proceedings of both parties; and, unfortunate as had been the occurrence, at least no one was to blame in the matter.

Tears fell plentifully during and after the ceremony, but they were poured for what had been, not for what was; and those who wept around the weeping Julia thought more of *that* bridal years ago, which had taken place under auspices as bright, and of that other bride, then in the pride of beauty, younger, lovelier than Julia, the same that to-day had risen before them to speak, by her altered brow and cheek by the shame of her loneliness, by

the tremendous gulf that yawned between herself and those who had been to her as mother and as sisters, by the terrible silence of that meeting and that parting, a warning more awful than aught that could have been spoken by the voice of the preacher.

Sad was the contrast as it presented itself in idea to our minds. Both brides of that morning were young, both lovely, both beloved; but ONE, fallen, fallen—a mark for men to point at, a sorrow and a shame to those who still remembered her, as completely lost as though in her grave—nay, more so, for we dared not even speak of her, nor mourn for her, save in secret; the other, pure and good, wedded to her first and last love—the faith, the trust, the virtuous hope of years, rewarded at last by a union sanctified by the approbation of all her nearest and dearest friends.

This was Julia. She deserved to be happy, and happy she was, and still is. Her life, at least, has been blessed in all things; she is happy in her husband, in her children; her name and fame are bright and stainless; we are proud to hear her spoken of; we do not blush as we think of her.

But, alas, alas, for Mary! as fair, and once as pure.

CHAPTER V.

THREE years had elapsed since the date of Julia's marriage, and we had heard very little of poor Mary. Scandal had done its worst, and had long since quitted its victim for fresher prey. Occasionally we saw, among the fashionable departures or arrivals in the Morning Post, the names of herself and husband, as leaving England for the Continent, or as returning. She wrote occasionally to her mother, but had never visited her, notwithstanding the urgent entreaties of Lady Norton

that she would do so. She never attempted in any way to renew any intercourse with her aunt; and even when Lady Desborough, through her mother, expressed a wish to be allowed to know her movements, Mary returned no answer to this overture towards reconciliation.

Lady Desborough loved her niece sincerely; her heart often yearned to see her again. She would continually reflect upon the miseries of her situation, cut off from all society, debarred every pleasure, noticed by none of her own sex, lonely, humiliated. The more she thought of her, the more she pitied her; and would often tell me that the next time she heard Mary was in her vicinity she would go and see her. "Of course I shall not let the girls know; but I shall go quietly, and offer to be of any service

to her that I can. Poor thing! She has greatly erred; but I will never cast her off."

But her ladyship's intentions we never put into practice: either Mary had not courage to meet the companions of her earlier and happier hours, or else the pride of Lyle rejected all offers of conciliation. However it was, they studiously concealed their movements, and, as I have said, gave no reply to the message sent by Lady Desborough through Lady Norton.

The latter lady returned to the eccentric mode of life from which she had somewhat deviated during the days of her daughter's prosperous union. From the moment that she heard of her elopement she secluded herself, sometimes even from her own servants, passing whole days in her own room almost without food, never quitting the precincts of the Grange,

and being invariably denied to visitors. She would answer Lady Desborough's letters, but never addressed her spontaneously; she declined to receive or to visit her sister-in-law; she shut herself up completely, turning away from a world that had offered her nothing but misery; yet vainly seeking, in the horrors of the solitude to which she doomed herself, consolation or forgetfulness.

Her father was dead: he departed, as to a peaceful sleep, from his extreme and painless age, sinking away from a quiet slumber into one more deep and lasting, and closing his prosperous and envied existence by a death that might be prayed for, it was so calm, and apparently so blessed.

Mrs. Marston also had departed this life. Her vivid spirit, turbulent and scheming to the

last, exhausted itself in devising new plans to repair the destruction of the old ones; and she died with law-papers and accounts scattered over her deathbed and clutched in her withered hands, and with words of pride upon her lips. "My son," were her last words, "make a good match; choose well your second wife; you might marry—might—mar-r-y"—"Any one," she would have added, but the grave closed her mouth.

Marston wept over his mother: with all his faults, his love and reverence for her had continued unabated; but he paid little heed to her dying injunctions as to a second union. Unknown to her, he had, not long after his divorce, proposed to Lady Anne Grantley, and met with a scornful rejection. Once Lady Anne's feelings towards him had been those of

paty, but she despised him now. She had seen it all—his early love for herself; his weak yielding to his mother's urgings; his yet weaker clinging to old predilections; his treatment of his wife. No wonder she rejected him with scorn.

But, though Marston had loved against hope—though he had continually assured himself that he was quite prepared to meet a refusal, and had no expectation, at any stage of his attachment, that its object would listen favourably to his suit; still, when this looked-for rejection arrived, it came with all the bitterness of sudden disappointment. The blow fell as heavily as though he had not seen its descent; and, with the inconsistency of his nature, he brooded over his misfortune until he persuaded himself into the belief

that he was, in reality, an extremely ill-used man.

His children grew up lovely little creatures ; and, as their remembrance of their "mamma" became less distinct, they ceased to enrage their father by their constant allusions to her, and utterance of her hated name. He gradually became reconciled to their presence, and, at last, as lavish of his fondness as he had been of yore.

During this interval the parents of Caroline returned from India. I have elsewhere described the meeting between themselves and their friends. Caroline had written incessantly for six years : her novels were exactly suited to the taste of the time ; many of them attained to second and third editions. The publishers found it their interest to give her a fair price ; and at the close of this period she

saw herself possessed of a considerable sum of money—the result of her genius and her labours. Sir Edward had continued to her the allowance he had made her from the first; and she did not decline it until her parents were in England. All she had attained was for them. Sir Edward had also aided her efforts in every possible way—investing her money for her as she received it, and watching over her interests with far greater vigilance than he ever displayed towards his own.

Caroline was enabled to rent a house for her father and mother, small, but perfectly *convenable*, in the near neighbourhood of her aunt's. The remains of her income, joined with what they could save beyond the payment of their debts, allowed them to live in very comfortable style. And George Danvers felt a fresh pang

as he reflected, "Had matters turned out differently, I should now have the run of this old dinner-giving Indian's feeds; and capital ones they are!" And Caroline, seeing her hopes accomplished, the ostensible ambition of her life fulfilled, strove, as she received two strangers to her heart, and called them by the dear and sacred name of "parents," to feel that she was happy—strove, by contemplating their happiness, by reflecting upon the speedy attainment of her object, upon her life of triumphs, her fame, the admiration so much her due, the gratitude of the returned exiles, to lull the vain longings of her own unsatisfied and lonely heart.

Three years, I have said, had elapsed since Julia's marriage. I had occasion to go to Dover, and, on my way back again, I stayed to

lunch at the Fountain inn, Canterbury. I had been sauntering in front of the inn, and, on re-entering, I wished to give some directions to my servant. Not seeing him about, I looked, *en passant*, into the bar, expecting to find him there. There he was; but, ere I addressed him, my eyes fell upon the form of a youngish-looking woman, of no very prepossessing personal appearance, though well dressed. She stood apart, engaged in conversation with another female, considerably older, who bore a large pack or bundle. Something struck me I had seen that young woman before, and that under painful circumstances of some nature, but I could not exactly recall them to mind.

Over her arm she carried a dress of rich velvet: it was of a superb regal purple, and she was displaying it in the sun's rays, thereby

exhibiting its beauties of texture and colour. The old pedlar (for so she seemed to be) was depreciating, while she was extolling it; and I soon perceived it was a matter of purchase and sale.

As I entered I caught the words —

“ Ah! it’s all over with my lady. Poor thing! She will never wear such finery again; and, indged, she had not worn this for months and months before she gave it to me.”

“ Oh! then she did give it to you?” said the elder woman.

“ Why, yes; she as good as gave it me long ago; she never wore it since her marriage with my lord, and, in course, it was looked upon as my perquisite; and just now I thought it was as well out of the way.”

Gradually, as I looked and listened, a vision

dawned upon me. I saw a fair and youthful being, the pride of all with whom she was connected, the light of a happy home, the mother of loving children. Again we sat in the glow of that broad sunset, in the bay-window of Marston Hall; again I heard the sounds of that sweet voice, the ringing of that merry laugh, telling of the heart's joyousness. I saw the sun's rays blaze on the robe of regal purple, dazzle in the whiteness of the beautiful bare neck and arms, float from the gems that decked the snowy breast, and crown with a halo of light the bright glory of the golden hair.

I entered, and advanced towards the women.

"You are with Lady Lyle, I think," I said, addressing the youngest, whom I had now recognised as the solitary attendant on, and witness to the marriage of, Lord George and Mary.

She started, coloured, and attempted to hide the dress. She evidently did not recognise me. I repeated my question, adding an inquiry after her mistress's health, and demanding to see her. The woman recovered herself, and answered, with considerable flippancy of manner, that her mistress was very ill, that her master was at Newmarket, and she did not think Lady Lyle would see any one.

However, I sent up my name, with an entreaty to be permitted to pay my respects; and I followed the maid up stairs, to await the effect of my message, having previously slipped a sovereign into her hand. After a little parleying, she came out, and informed me that her mistress had consented to receive me. As I passed her to enter the 'apartment, she detained me for a moment, whispering,

"Be so good, sir, as not to mention about the velvet dress to my lady. Anything like business does so worry her now."

I gave the girl a look which must have perfectly indicated my knowledge of the nature of the transaction alluded to, and, without speaking, stepped into the presence of *Mary*!

And when my tongue found speech, that was all that I could utter—*Mary*!

The room was large, and darkened: a bed stood in one part of it. Before me, as I entered, was a dressing-table, with mirror and all the luxurious appliances of the toilette. Beside it stood a *Psyche*, the candelabra full of wax-lights, one of which only was glimmering, and this for the purpose apparently of sealing a letter, for one lay upon a little table beneath, on which was also a small writ-

ing-desk I had often seen before. A considerable degree of elegance appeared in the furniture of the room, and of one adjoining, the door of which was open. Evidently they were the best rooms in the hotel. On a sofa, in the farthest corner of the apartment, carefully secluded from the rays of the sun, *she* was lying, her face buried in her hands.

I approached her, I knelt beside her. I addressed her by her name, but she replied not, nor moved her hands. I took them, and by a gentle force I drew them from her face, and, stooping over them, I covered them with kisses.

She broke the silence that followed, but in a voice so weak and low, in accents so hopelessly sad. How unlike the tones whose proud delight was yet ringing in my ears!

" Ah ! John," she said ; " how good of you to come and see me !"

" How kind of you to say so, Mary ! But I feared I might be intruding. You have always appeared to shun your old friends. I feared my presence might not be welcome."

" Alas !" she answered, " I could not bear to meet those I had disgraced ; and what right had *I* to friends ? But now—now—all is changed ; I am going ; and to bid you farewell is a happiness I had not looked for, and do not deserve."

" Going !" I repeated her words with an affected accent of surprise. Alas ! my heart foreboded her sad meaning.

" Do you not know, John," she said, smiling faintly, "*I am dying* ?"

Alas ! it was written on her face ; but I

replied with words of encouragement and hope; words which neither she nor I believed, and which passed my lips while tears of unutterable anguish were falling from my eyes.

She was changed more than I could have believed it possible that three years could change. Life, light, lustre, hope—these had already departed. A pale, faded phantom, with large hollow eyes and long damp tresses, yet beautiful with its dim unearthly loveliness, lay upon that darkened couch, and spoke of death. A terrible thought crossed me. Lyle was unkind to her; the fate too often that of those who sin as she had sinned had descended upon her. I inquired why *he* was absent. She blushed deeply as she replied,—

“Lyle is gone to the Newmarket meeting, and thence to town; but he promised to return

in three weeks. He has been gone a fortnight; but he will be here in time, John. There is no fear of that," she continued, laying her wasted hand upon my arm. "He never deceives me. He has been only too kind to me," she added with a sigh; "for his sake I have clung to life too long."

"But surely, Mary," I said, "you will write to him, or permit me to do so."

"No; he will return *in time*—of that I feel sure; and I would rather, now upon the threshold of the grave, be freed from the presence of the earthly idol which hath hitherto filled my heart. I would strive to seek forgiveness. I have repented long and bitterly; yet have I never ceased to love the cause of my crime. Must not I also pray to be forgiven for that love?" And she wept bitterly.

"Remember, Mary," I said, willing to soothe her, "he is now *your husband*."

"Ah! so he is," she cried wildly. "Thank you, thank you for that word."

"Will you not write to your mother, Mary? Allow her the consolation of nursing you through your illness. It will soothe her from her own self-preying thoughts."

"I *have* written to my mother," said Mary. "I have prayed her to come and bless my deathbed!"

"Oh, Mary! do not talk thus."

Mary was evidently sinking under a deep decline, a complaint of which several members of the Broughton family had died. Her wasted form, the light hectic burning on her cheek, the hollow eyes, the deep racking cough, the gasps of pain, the cold drops that rose

continually upon her bony forehead—these were symptoms not to be mistaken. I sometimes, as I watched her, dreaded that, at the close of the week of which she spoke, her husband would *not be in time*.

The medical man attending arrived to cut short our conference. I left her for a space, taking with me her letter to Lady Norton, which I promised to see posted. On inquiry I found the up mail had started, and that no further post would quit Canterbury for town until the following morning. I felt no time was to be lost; and I accordingly engaged a post-chaise, and started immediately for London, where I had left the Desboroughs; and at the same time I sent my man with my own carriage and Mary's letter to Lady Norton.

The results of these proceedings were, that

the latter lady reached Canterbury next morning, and I returned with Lady Desborough and Sir Edward in the course of the following afternoon.

From the physician in attendance, and from the maid, we learned that Mary had been delicate for some time; that her indisposition had increased much during the last few months; and that a cold caught at the time of her arrival at Canterbury had brought to its present fearful crisis the disorder that had long been lurking in her frame.

She and her husband were on their way to the south of France; but business had recalled Lyle to town, and she had agreed to wait for him in Canterbury until he had arranged his affairs. He was first to attend the Newmarket meeting.

This conduct on his part proved but too plainly how little he had suspected the presence of danger in the illness under which Mary laboured when he left her. Everything we could gather seemed to confirm her assertion of his continued kindness towards her. Mary was dying ; and no doubt mental suffering had done much towards this catastrophe ; but her grief had not been that bitterest one caused by the ingratitude of him for whom she had given up so much. Hers was not the pain

“ To have thrown the precious heart away,
And met such black return ! ”

But a deep, deep sense of the crime she had committed ; the vainly-stifled yearnings of the mother in her breast ; her remorse for all the shame and misery to which her conduct had doomed those children of her love and the

parent who had already suffered so much; the consciousness of her own disgrace,—these thoughts, and many as bitter, were continually in her mind. These did their work at last; and she was dying.

How terrible a thing is guilt! Young, lovely, beloved, rich in this world's goods, passionately attached to the partner of her fault, as passionately worshipped in return, Mary thanked God that she was dying! and not with the calm, thankful accents of the Christian, who, in expiring, gazes with rapture forward to the assured bliss in store for him, and departeth as to his home; but with the weak cry of intolerable woe and weariness, looking not beyond the anguish of the present time, asking only for rest—rest and forgetfulness.

It was thus, with agony unutterable, with despairing accents, with bitter weeping, that Mary thanked God that she was dying!

All through that weary week we watched beside the opening grave of her who had been our greatest pride—who was now our deepest sorrow. All through that week Lady Norton sat by the foot of the bed, her face turned towards her child, her eyes fixed upon her, silent, absorbed, sometimes almost unconscious of all that passed around her.

The physician assured us there was no hope: but the anxious affection of Lady Desborough induced her to call in other advice. Sir Henry came immediately he received her summons: he had known Mary in her brighter days. Even *his* schooled lip and eye betrayed his emotion as he gazed upon the desolation before

him; while the sight of one she had met under such different circumstances caused a fearful access of passionate and shameful grief in the breaking heart of the poor sufferer.

He beckoned Sir Edward from the room.—

“There is no hope,” he said. “Her days are numbered.”

Mary’s first interview with her aunt and uncle had been a terrible one for her. Long did they soothe and lavish words of affection upon her. Her self-accusings were too strong. She could not look them in the face. Gradually she recovered herself; and it seemed some consolation to her to speak with them, when her strength permitted her, of past days and events.

Thus she would falter forth, her cheek crimson with shame,—

“Will Caroline, will Julia and Fanny,

receive my love, if you give it to them after I am dead, and can disgrace them no further? And then she would ask about Julia's children. "Were they dark or fair? did they resemble their father or their mother? were they finer children than *hers* had been at their age?"

And to everything she said her aunt and uncle returned kind and cheerful answers, speaking to her as though she still had been one of them—still the proud, the lovely Mary of old times. They strove to soothe her into forgetfulness of what she *was*—the shunned, the dying outcast.

They told her all the circumstances of the deaths of Neville and Henry Wentworth, of Danvers's proposal to Caroline, of Fanny's inexplicable quarrel or coolness with Tom Wilmot, and of Tom's marriage. And when the names of

the latter couple were mentioned, her face brightened for a moment, and she smiled with something of the radiant glory that would play around her lips with the laugh of happier days. Then some one spoke of Marmaduke, and she started alightly, and sighed as she said,—

“ Ah! poor Marmaduke! I had forgotten him. He was one of my best friends. Had he been more with us, Marston would have loved me still.”

It was the first time I had ever heard her name her late husband. It was also the first time that Marmaduke had been alluded to. It was a relief to me to hear her use the words, “she had forgotten him.” Alas! I knew that he remembered her, and but too well.

Without informing any one of my proceedings, I wrote to Marmaduke. I told him of

Mary's illness and expected decease ; I left the rest to himself. I did not ask him to come and see her while there was yet time, but I knew that he would do so.

During the week intervening between my first interview with Mary and the arrival of Lyle, her disorder took its last and fatal turn—the alternate fits of languor and intense pain, the frightful night-perspirations, the incessant cough. Beneath the influence of these and other symptoms the life ebbed visibly before our eyes ; while Lady Desborough nursed her with unwearied affection, and the pale mother, tearless as a statue, sat and watched through all.

Sir Edward and myself passed a melancholy time in wandering about the dull town of Canterbury, or in mournful conversations, for the most part relating to the misfortunes of the

Nortons—the tragical death of Sir James, the afflictions of his widow, and this, the last and greatest misery.

From time to time we were admitted to visit Mary; but our interviews were rapidly curtailed, and each one found her fearfully changed. From Lady Desborough we heard the sad particulars of her sufferings, both mental and bodily.

Sometimes, slightly delirious, she would rave aloud of her past life, and of her future terrors. She would call upon the names of her children and her husband, coupling the pure names of those innocent little ones with that of her seducer; praying alike for both; then moaning incoherently of some future punishment, which she felt she deserved, yet dared to deprecate.

Twice she received letters from Lyle. These she hailed with an agonized delight, kissing them, bathing them with tears. Then we entreated her to allow us to write for him to return at once; but she begged us not to do so. "He will be here in time," she always said. "I shall see him again. He will know the truth too soon. Let me *now* try and think of something else."

"*Something else!*" The world beyond! Poor Mary, whose short life had been one of thoughtless gaiety and of engrossing passion, found herself at the gates of that world, unprepared, uncertain, with a heavy sin upon her conscience, distracted by fears, with no one near her with the power to lead her spirit gently to repentance and to peace.

She repented, it is true; but she despaired

She saw the avenging Judge of sin, and trembled; and, blinded by the lightnings of His wrath, could not raise her eyes to that cross where Christ had died to redeem her. And here we contemplated the spectacle—awful in the abstract, a thousand times more awful when thus brought home to our experiences—of an immortal soul given up to the torments of self-accusation; longing to die, yet fearing death from the consciousness of sin; praying, repenting, yet without hope.

Lady Desborough's commonplace consolations were of no avail in such a case as this. The good Sir Edward said little, but what he said was somewhat more to the purpose; while Lady Norton, with her wild, haggard face, and few muttered words, strangely commenting upon the ravings of her daughter, or

interrupting the simple sentences of Sir Edward, added horror to the scene.

It was in the midst of such a scene that Marmaduke Lincoln arrived, an altered man from what he had been the last time we met. A few years had brought more than their share of change to his appearance, had robbed him too early of the lightness and the buoyancy of youth.

He entered Mary's room, and she turned her fading eyes upon him with an expression of affectionate gratitude. No burning blush of shame painfully crimsoned the wasted features; she was too near death, too weakened, both in mind and body, to remember all the circumstances by which she was surrounded; but she could recollect him as always her friend and true counsellor. She welcomed him as the source of comfort now.

And so it was—it had long been his office to raise the bruised reed, and bind the broken heart. He was skilful to soothe the perturbed spirit.

Calmly and gently he began his task. Mary listened, and took comfort from his words: the hungry soul became satisfied.

With unwearied patience he heard her sob forth her confession of sin and terror—heard her speak of the grave as a place of rest—heard her wildly wish that there all might end. He bade her not despair—he spoke of sins forgiven and iniquities blotted out—he drove the demon from his grasp upon her blind and sinking soul, and bade her think of Him who said “Thy sins be forgiven thee.”

A blessed change took place. Mary’s heart was filled with the divine power of grace.

Humbled, but no longer despairing, she prayed with fervour, believing that her prayers were heard.

The week passed, and Lyle arrived. He had known nothing of all this. On him the blow fell with a double force. Mary had begged me to meet him on his return, and break quietly the news of her illness and danger to him. But her precautions were useless; he came some hours before he was expected, and we knew not of his arrival until he stood by the bedside of his wife.

Marmaduke was reading to her when he entered; Lady Desborough and myself were also in the room, and, of course, Lady Norton. But this latter had become almost a cipher; and, indeed, during the whole of that day she had not opened her lips.

Never shall I forget the appearance of Lyle as he stepped among us—so handsome, so noble, so dignified! his fine features glowing with the haste with which he had ridden the few miles he had come that day; his dark hair flung back from his broad brow; his eyes radiant with expectation; his lips open to hail his beloved Mary.

And then the change—first to a look of haughty surprise as his glance fell upon the number of strangers it encountered, then to fearful inquiry, lastly to a pallid anguish, for his eyes met those of Mary, and her look told him all.

Alas! the writing of death is easily read. Mary was already half released from earth.

Then came a scene I would willingly forget. Well had Mary willed that he should not be

recalled. She knew the power of her soul-absorbing love for him, of his for her.

From that moment they were to each other all in all, as they long had been. No word, no look from Mary was given to any other person; while his eyes, fixed for ever upon hers, dropped on the loving face whose light must soon be quenched the hot tears of a deadly agony; while "Do not weep for me, dear George!" she would say. "It is better for us that we should part. You must be happy when I am gone, dearest; but do not forget me—do not forget me, George! Oh, do not weep for me! it is better we should part."

That love, born in guilt, proclaimed in shame, for which they had given up so much—for which, as branded felons, they were at once debarred from intercourse with all the holier

ties of life—for which one had deserted husband, children, all the innocent affections of girlhood ; the other, mother, sisters, his parental roof, his profession—retained, amid all the trials and mortifications of their situation, a strength, a singleness, a constancy, a devotedness, that hallowed it, in this its dying hour, to something reverential and holy.

Oh ! the fondness, the unspeakable fondness, that lit up the countenance of Mary, and hovered on her lips. With what faint murmured words of blessing did she raise her feeble hand, and pass it across the sable curls and bowed head of her husband ! All save him seemed forgotten—the restless anguish of body, the fearful conflicts of mind. Past, present, future—all seemed centered in him ; and he, with a grief beyond endurance, cried

on Heaven to spare his treasure, or to take him with her.

And that sun went down, and the moon arose; she set, and the stars came forth, and again the east was crimsoned with the dawn; and all that time these two, clasped in a last embrace, held sad communion. Not for a second would he quit her side. All the little tender offices of the gentlest nurse were performed by him with double tenderness. He raised the weary head, and bathed the fevered lips with cooling draughts, and wiped the damp brow, and kissed away, with gentle touches, the tears that fell ceaselessly from his eyes.

But, before the morning's dawn, those eyes were gazing into orbs whence no longer any answering love could shine; those arms supported a form where only the *pain* of life

remained; and, ere the sun rose in his glory, Mary was dead!

Lady Desborough came to my room to announce the close of all, and to entreat me to come and join my influence to Sir Edward's to get Lyle out of the apartment. I went; and there, by the grey light of morning, I saw the corpse of Mary. The bereaved husband hung above the lifeless clay, kissed frantically the icy lips, the marble brow, the golden hair; called madly on the name of Mary—of her whose ears were deaf, whose lips were dumb.

There, too, sat that miserable mother, but with a calm smile upon her face.

"How soundly poor Mary sleeps!" she said. "I am very glad of it; for she was very tired last night, and to-morrow is her wedding-day. I am glad she sleeps so soundly."

Mary was dead, and at rest ; but her mother was spared the comprehension of this sorrow. Her aberration, merciful to herself, was most painful to those around her. She inquired why we wept ; asked who Lord George was, and whether he would be at the marriage to-morrow ; and at last was led from the chamber of death, smiling and chattering, as happy and as unconscious as a little child.

All through that past night, when we knew that she was dying, and that we might never see her more in the flesh, I had listened to the rapid pacings to and fro in the apartment of Marmaduke. I could hear the awful struggle, the spirit wrestling with the frailty of our nature, the attempts at resignation, the wild entreaty, the smothered ejaculation, the muttered prayer, the agony of supplication, fol-

lowed by the low moaning revulsion of despair—all the fearful trials of the heart that strove to say, "THY WILL BE DONE."

We announced to him that all was over; but he did not quit his apartment until he knew the coffin-lid covered the dead face he might not bear to look upon; and when we saw him again, the once dark hair, changed to white, showed what grief could do. Mary was taken to Stanwell, and buried in the cathedral church, near the tomb of her grandfather the late bishop. It was the fancy of Lyle that she should be there interred, for in that cathedral he had first seen her.

I accompanied the remains to their last resting-place. Sir Edward also paid this last mark of affection towards the departed, and of respect for the feelings of the agonized hus-

band. We three only stood beside the narrow vault, and watched the cold heavy stones close for ever above the broken heart beneath. There, in the same sacred fane where her first marriage rites were celebrated, she sleeps in sad oblivion, and a single marble slab records, in few words, her name and age alone.

Her children often, as they grew to youth, would pause and wonder, as they passed down those stately aisles, who was "Mary Lyle"—she who died so young, and was buried so near the noble tomb they were told held the bones of their venerable ancestor; but many years elapsed ere they learned, through bitter experiences, the tale comprised in those two little words. I, standing beside that vault, whose closed mouth spoke with an eloquence above all the tongues of men, listened to the

awful lesson it proclaimed. "Here," it seemed to say—"here is the end of all for you. My rule beginneth here. I take to my dark home the form ye have so loved, and the mind whose light was shed from God himself. I preach how vain are youth and beauty, and all the gifts men most prize, to give happiness on earth. But a short time since ye saw the bride in the pride of her maiden loveliness, and she is now mine own; and all the treasure of love which was lavished on her through life, which even follows her to the boundary of my kingdom, could not save her from grief and sin and death, and avails her not beyond. Depart, and lay the lesson to your hearts."

And so I turned away, and went towards the altar at which *she* had paid her early vows; and I recalled the brilliancy of that scene, the

thought of what I had so lately witnessed, then returned again to her grave. "And thus," I exclaimed, "perish the hopes of earth. Who that witnessed that bridal could have anticipated this early and shame-clouded burial?"

Alas! *that* was the cause of *this*: that marriage—contracted without passion on either side, the result of mercenary machinations, a sacrifice to pride, and wealth, and the Dagon of worldly ambition—bore this bitter fruit: *there* was the selfish offering made. We had seen its retributive acceptation: *HERE* was the terrible consummation.

CHAPTER VI.

“AND so, Fanny, Mrs. Jones’s prophecy is fulfilled. Here are you and Caroline, with your half-score of lapdogs, two ‘desolate old maids.’”

So spoke I, in merry mood, to Fanny Random one day at Rayton Hall. The Armathwaites had quitted this charming place, and Fanny had decided upon not letting it again, but upon occupying it occasionally herself; and of course her chosen friend Caroline was always invited to share with her the sweets of such a

retirement; and for several years after the death of Mary, Fanny regularly spent the summer on Windermere. Her aunt and uncle, William, Caroline, and myself, were almost invariably of the party; while Lord Newton, still a devoted, though extremely stout and gouty admirer, always found some excuse for visiting "the Cottage" about the same season of the year.

"Ah! Mrs. Jones was right," said Caroline; "but, cousin John, I did not think so then."

"Nor I neither," murmured Fanny, with a mournful expression on her face.

"But at any rate, young ladies, it is your own fault," observed William, and his voice faltered as he spoke.

"Not exactly, William, I trust," replied Caroline. "If all our misfortunes were to be

attributed to our own misconduct, our sufferings would be great indeed."

"But Fanny's," I said, willing to turn the conversation—"Fanny's misfortunes are all of her own creation. She has half the peerage at her feet, and commoners enough to fill a volume of Burke, yet she persists in being an 'old maid;' therefore there is no pity for her.

"Now just tell me, Fanny," I continued, "why will you not marry young Murray?"

"Young Murray," alas! was, like most of us, falling somewhat into the sere and yellow; but we still called him "young Murray."

"Cousin John," replied Fanny, gravely, "do not ask me these sort of questions; they only distress me. It is impossible I should tell you why I cannot marry Mr. Murray, much as I like him."

“ Well then, Fanny, I will not tease you about him. But I think—poor fellow!—he deserves some reward for the constancy of I do not know how many years.”

“ And you,” I heard William whisper to Caroline—“ and are you determined upon dying an old maid ?”

“ Yes, dear William, I am ; and if you wish to make me happy, you will forget me, and wed another. Much of happiness remains before you yet. Do not, I pray, reject it for my sake. Could I live the past over again, with my present experience, all should be different ; but it is now too late : nothing, nothing can now alter the irrevocable past.”

I was near her, so was Fanny : we heard her words, and I could not forbear reply.—

“ You should be happy, Caroline ! You,

who are so admired, so loved, so worshipped by some; you, who have attained all your wishes, rescued your parents from exile, made yourself a name; you, crowned at the Capitol!—do you still talk of sorrow or of disappointment? Are you not happy?”

She was sitting, William beside her; my loving eyes fixed upon her face; the brow of her friend Fanny resting on her shoulder. Years had flown by since she was last before my readers, but they had not robbed her of one charm. She was the same as ever; the same fair brow and rounded cheek, the same dark witching orbs, the same luxuriant hair. I was gazing at her; and it seemed as though I saw her for the first time. All the glory of her peerless beauty appeared to rise anew

upon my vision; and tears filled my eyes as I saw kindred drops roll down her cheek. She clasped her hands upon her knee.

“No!” said Caroline. “I am utterly alone!”

“Say not so, Caroline—say not so! Are you not surrounded by friends? do not all love you? has not William given all his life to you? and *my heart*——”

But the mood was past. She sprang gaily from her seat; placing her dear hand upon my mouth, she stopped me in my speech.

“Oh! pray, cousin John, don’t make me an offer; pray, pray, stop!” And then, turning towards William, “And you, dear Willy, think no more of me: believe me, all is for the best.”

Sad and strange was it to me that one so

superior as Caroline—one with so fine a mind, so noble an enthusiasm, with views so lofty, and with so much self-command—should have allowed the influence of such a man as Danvers thus to have condemned her whole life to vain repinings; thus to have blighted for ever the verdure and the bloom of youth.

But, sad and strange as it seemed, it nevertheless was true. His personal influence had long been over; he now to her was nothing. But the deep and bitter lesson he had taught her, the agony she had suffered, the opinion which his conduct had induced her to entertain towards the rest of his sex, had completely warped all the tendencies of her warm and susceptible nature; and the streams of affection, which would have made, under happier

circumstances, the lifelong bliss of herself and of one worthy of her, now, checked in their first bounteous flowings, turned back upon their own course, to desolate and torture the heart whence they arose. And thus we had seen that, with poor Mary, beauty, and all that charms and wins, had been no sources of happiness; now we beheld that Caroline, with equal loveliness, with all the higher gifts of mind and soul, could not command fate. Once she had proudly deemed her fate in her own hands, and so had we; but destiny, mocking the shortsightedness of men, had shown us how all personal and mental charms had but wrought the misery of their possessors; while humbler gifts and meeker ambitions were crowned with all earthly happiness.

For Julia, so inferior in beauty to these two, so little remarkable in mental qualifications, was indeed most happy; and, in watching her pure and blessed existence, I found some consolation for all that I had seen descend upon those as near and dear.

And it was also a comfort to us all—chiefly to his excellent father—when, some years after the little conversation I have related in the beginning of this chapter, William Desborough married Lady Anne Grantley. William was past the meridian of life when this took place; and Sir Edward, at a very advanced age, stayed but to witness the fulfilment of his desires on this point, then departed to a better world.

Sir William and Lady Anne Desborough

are a very happy couple. The *bride* looked somewhat *passée*, and the outlines of her magnificent features and stately form had become somewhat hard and angular; but the *wife* is a lovely creature; happiness has softened the character alike of her mind and person; and the warm smiles of affection that play around her mouth, the glances of love that light her eyes as they fall upon her husband and her children, together with a becoming plumpness which fills up the Phidian lineaments of that fine face, render her more truly fascinating than she was even in her brightest and most youthful days.

They are a happy couple I have said. She had early fixed her fancy upon William; and, though not of a nature to allow this fancy to

increase into a serious attachment as long as she perceived no answering feeling in its object, still, when that object manifested symptoms of affection towards herself, she was indeed glad to be allowed to remove from her heart the constraint under which it had long laboured, and all its as yet uncalled-for and unexercised feelings and affections gushed upwards into light at once, shedding refreshing verdure over her own hitherto self-reserved and barren path, and on those of all within her sphere.

As for William, it had been a long time before he could sufficiently wean himself from the hopes which had grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength; but he has never repented of the step he took.

He took it reluctantly—this I must tell my readers—obeying the dictates of reason more than those of love. But his wife was never aware how great had been the struggle; had she been so, in all probability her pride would have conquered at last, as it had done through life, and she would have rejected the unwilling homage; they would have been still apart, and neither happy. But, as her love rose above all other considerations, as she unfolded to him the interest he had always excited in her, as she confessed the delight his preference had given her, as she addressed him in the soft tones and bestowed the gentle caresses of a most devoted wife to the husband of her entire love, his spirit answered hers; he regretted the time that he had lost while dreaming the

dream to which he had given his best years, while this treasure sparkled neglected before his eyes.

Yet, though thus enchanted with the lot that had been literally forced upon him, he did not cease to love his Caroline. But to her he looked up as to some bright star—a thing to worship, to adore, to dream of—never, ah! never, to possess!

Lady Anne knew of this long and fruitless attachment, but it caused her no uneasiness. She felt herself beloved; and in her humbler happiness the proud Lady Anne stooped to a divided heart.

Poor Lady Norton finds the rest at last she so often prayed for. She died without any return of the consciousness of her situation. She re-

sided at the Grange until her decease, being continually visited by her sister-in-law and relations. To her dying day she spoke of Mary's marriage as about to take place. All the fearful circumstances of her death, all her own previous sufferings, had passed from her memory for ever; and we thanked the Mercy which so ordained it.

Marston, about five years subsequent to his rejection by Lady Anne, was united to Susan Broom, sometime under-housemaid in his establishment. As for George Danvers, he is that thing considered even less than a living ass, namely, "a dead lion." He may still be seen about town, grown very stout, and wearing a glossy wig; but his glory is departed. A new set of lion-hunters has succeeded to

the old one to which he had gained admittance. He finds himself out of date; and long habits of indolence and self-indulgence, together with the encroachments of age, have unfitted him for fighting his way again to distinction and the *entrée* of the coteries. Lady Desborough has had whole legions of new pets: she has forgotten him. Jostled out of place by scores of younger competitors, he finds himself cast on one side, and regrets every day, and every hour of the day, the shortsightedness which separated him from Caroline and "that set."

Lady Desborough resides almost wholly in town, except when she pays her annual visits to her daughter, now Countess of Carlington, and to Holmesley, where each year another little face is added to the smiling flock that welcome grandmamma to her old home.

On these visits I generally accompany her. She and I are still affectionate friends and close allies, though our confabulations are sadly shorn of their interest; for all our "little girls," save one, are past the time of hopes and fears, and that one is old enough to take care of herself; but how the affairs of that one are progressing may be learned from part of the following conversation, which took place the day before yesterday, beside the blazing fire in her ladyship's snug boudoir in the house in May Fair:—

"And so, John, you say Caroline's last work is excellent. I must get Fanny to read it to me. My eyes are failing me: I cannot understand what can be the matter with them. I must consult Alexander about them. It is

very strange, but I cannot see to read without glasses."

"It is very strange, Jane; and I am in the same predicament. My sight is becoming unaccountably weak; nor can I walk so much as I could. Strange! is it not? I sometimes think that at our age, perhaps, we must expect to fail a little."

Lady Desborough looked rather astonished as I ventured this suggestion.

"Ah! John," she said with a sigh, "I suppose one cannot last for ever. Poor Hamilton is gone, you see."

"Yes; I heard of his death yesterday. He died at Wilmot's, in the Isle of Wight; killed by Miss Clapham and a bookseller, both of whom are to be indicted for murder at the

ensuing assizes. I think it will go hard with Miss Clapham. Poor old lady! If she is hung, I really must go and see her "launched into eternity," as the phrase goes."

"John! what nonsense you do talk! How could Miss Clapham murder Mr. Hamilton? Now, tell me all about it."

"Well, Jane, I have told you she murdered him, and these are the particulars: Hamilton went into a bookseller's shop, and ordered some books to be sent to him. Just after he left, Miss Clapham and Mrs. Wilmot entered. 'Ah!' said Miss Clapham, 'Mr. Hamilton has ordered these, has he? Pray look, dear Mrs. Wilmot; Anecdote Hamilton is going to "read up" for our benefit. Here are diaries and private histories enough for a hundred "anecdotes."' "

“ The last part of the speech had been lost upon the bookseller ; but the former was not. He heard the words ‘ Anecdote Hamilton ;’ and in the simplicity of his innocent heart imagined that to be really the name of his customer. See the result ! He sent the books directed to ‘ Anecdote Hamilton, Esq.’

“ Poor Hamilton soon learned how the sobriquet had become attached to him. He was overpowered with chagrin, and had a fit of the gout in consequence. This was followed by other illnesses, during the course of which he pondered upon his sad fate in thus being made the subject of ridicule for the very quality upon which he most prided himself. He felt he could never again tell another anecdote. His occupation, indeed, was gone ; so he went

also. And if Miss Clapham did not murder him, my name is not John Greville."

"Poor Hamilton!" sighed her ladyship. "He certainly was a great bore; but there are many greater ones left still among us; nor is Miss Clapham the least among them. But, John, how strange that Tom Wilmot and Fanny should be about making a match of it after all!"

"Strange indeed! Things do turn out very oddly in this world. After so long a separation, to meet at last as affianced lovers! Were you present at the first interview?"

"Oh, no! I thought they had better meet without witnesses, that nothing might check a full explanation between them. But Fanny told me all the particulars."

“ Well, Jane, tell them to me ; will you not ? ”

“ Oh ! of course, if you care to hear them. First of all, Tom Wilmot told her she was little altered ; then he said he trusted that his own changed person would cause no change in her feelings towards him.”

“ And he is changed, poor fellow ! ” I interposed.

“ Yes ; he has suffered a great deal. His late wife and her relations led him a sad life. His children (he has an awful number of them) were his only sources of comfort ; some of them are too much like their mother—round black eyes, white faces, and no eyebrows ; but that *en passant*. He seemed quite broken down, and, though still young, has a worn and haggard look ; and—would you believe it?—

spite of his large allowances, he has returned to England in debt. His wife and her mother led him into the most ridiculous extravagances, in order to facilitate the 'getting off' of his sisters-in-law. His wife's death was a certain shock to him; but I hope he will be happy now with Fanny. As for his reasons for quitting the Cottage in that abrupt way, he says that he was on the point of proposing to Fanny when he heard that she had called him 'a silly boy,' or some such name; so, imagining she would not accept him, he fled her dangerous presence precipitately, and was caught in the snares from which he has just been freed. During his married slavery he often thought over the occurrence which had separated him from his only true love. He perceived, and

bitterly repented, the rashness of his conduct ; and the moment he could with any decency prefer a second suit, he wrote to Fanny from Florence, offering her the heart that had long been hers, and the hand that at last was free. In a very few weeks they will be united, I trust, for a long and happy union. But, John, if one had had the power of foreseeing things, and ruling them to one's wishes, how differently everything would have turned out ! Caroline might now have been a happy wife and mother ; poor Mary still on earth and wedded to one worthy of her—perhaps to Lord George, perhaps to Marmaduke Lincoln ; had those two old plotters left her alone, she would have chosen after her own heart's dictates. I am sure *I* would never have coerced or even in-

fluenced her. Who knows?—her affections might have been given to Marmaduke; and—poor fellow!—I know he loved her; even I could discern that, John. And his future lonely life and vanished spirits show how deep the feeling must have been. Then Fanny and Tom Wilmot would have passed together those bright hours of life for whose loss nothing that follows can compensate, instead of suffering years of separation, and meeting thus at last, with the freshness and buoyancy of youth forever departed, with forms touched by time, and spirits clouded by disappointment and care. How different all might have been! But it's no use repining over what cannot be undone: we must console ourselves with thinking 'everything is for the best.'"

“ Yes, Jane, the hopes and visions of our younger days were encouraged and dreamed in vain ; but we couldn’t help it. All our ‘ little girls,’ except Julia, were worthy of better destinies ; but we must be content : *it was their fates !*”

Not, gentle reader, that I am altogether a fatalist, but I thought this the best way of dismissing the subject.

THE END.

